

TAUNTON'S

MARCH 1998 NO. 25

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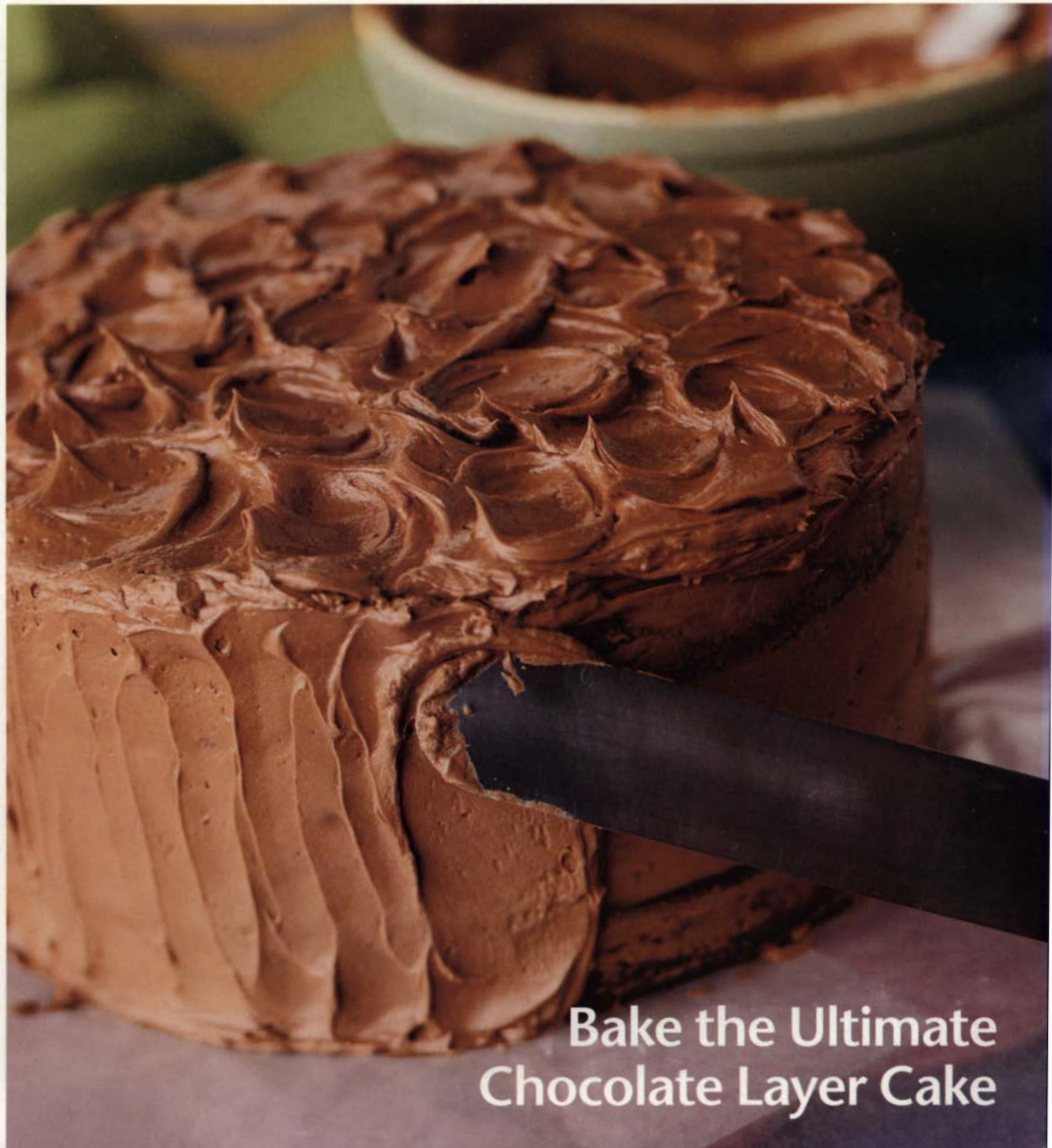
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Toss a wonderful winter salad with crisp, fresh greens from the chicory family.



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Enjoy roasted vegetables in half the time, here tossed with herbs, pasta, and a light sauce of Parmesan cheese and chicken stock.



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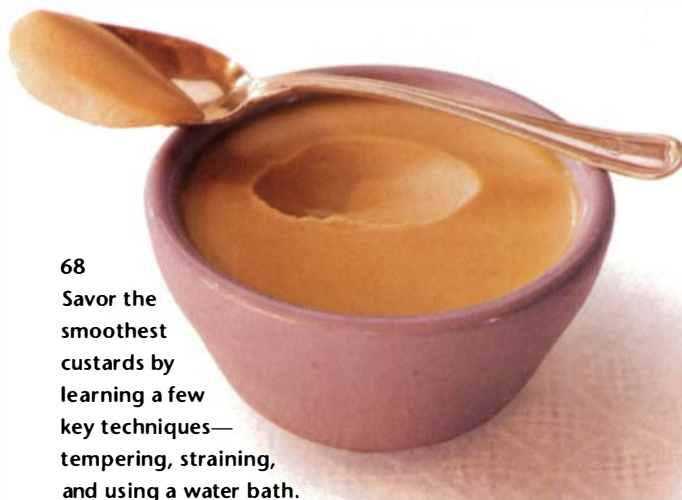
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by Joanne Chang

Learn the secret to making satiny-smooth custard, and then create three different luscious desserts—*crème caramel*, *crème brûlée*, and *pot de crème*

On the cover: *Chocolate Layer Cake with Mocha Milk Chocolate Frosting*, p. 50.

Cover photo, Karl Petzke. These pages: lower left, Ben Fink; upper left, Boyd Hagen; above, Mark Thomas; below, Ben Fink.



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Savor the smoothest custards by learning a few key techniques—tempering, straining, and using a water bath.



After studying math and economics at Harvard and then working as a management consultant for two years, **Joanne Chang** ("A Trio of Silky Custards," p. 68) realized that the kitchen is where she's the happiest. So she started cooking at Biba in Boston and then baking at Bentonwood Bakery in Newton, Massachusetts, before becoming the pastry chef at

Rialto in Cambridge for two years. She recently left Boston for New York City to work with François Payard at Payard Pâtisserie. When she's not making—or eating—pastries, Joanne's probably running. She has run every Boston Marathon since 1991 and so far one New York Marathon, with more to come now that she's traded Harvard Square for Union Square.

In 1992, **Susie Middleton** ("Delicious Roasted Vegetables," p. 30) quit her job as a magazine editor to pursue her passion for cooking. After graduating from Peter Kump's New York Cooking School and cooking at Al Forno restaurant in Providence, Rhode Island, she worked as a chef in a gourmet market in Newport. She moonlighted for the *Providence Journal*, all the while hoping to find one job that combined food and publishing. She did, as an associate editor for *Fine Cooking*.



Elizabeth Terry ("Crisp-Coated Chicken," p. 34) and her family bought a turn-of-the-century mansion in Savannah, Georgia, in 1981, built a restaurant downstairs and living quarters upstairs, and plunged into the "wild storm of the restaurant business," as she recounts in her award-winning cookbook, *Savannah Seasons*. Wild storm perhaps, but Elizabeth on 37th became a wild success, and 17 years later, they're still at it.

Josh Eisen ("Better-Than-Ever Mashed Potatoes," p. 38) is a food and wine writer and consultant and a frequent contributor to *Fine Cooking*. A graduate of the professional program at Peter Kump's New York Cooking School, he worked as sous-chef at Le Perigord in New York City before trading his whisk for a word processor. He still cooks fabulous food, but now it's mostly for family, lucky friends, and for publication.

Paul Bertolli ("Bouillabaisse Menu," p. 42) is the chef/co-owner of Oliveto restaurant in Oakland, California; he was the chef at Chez Panisse for many years and is the co-author of *Chez Panisse Cooking* (Random House, 1988). When he's not cooking or writing, he's probably making balsamic vinegar, hunting, fishing, or foraging for the wild foods that are so bountiful in northern California. Paul is a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*.



Food writer **Micol Negrin** ("Cooking Fennel to Bring Out Its Sweet Side," p. 47) travels from New York City to Italy once a year to visit family, including her grandmother in Milan. Though she loves Italian food, Micol enjoys cooking from all different cuisines, something she fine-tuned while running her own catering company in Montreal.

Alice Medrich ("Baking a Layer Cake for Pure Chocolate Bliss," p. 50) is a writer, pastry chef, and teacher. She's the only two-time winner of the James Beard Cookbook of the Year Award for *Cocolat: Extraordinary Chocolate Desserts* and *Chocolate & the Art of Low-Fat Desserts*. Alice recently appeared on the PBS series "Baking with Julia." She lives in Berkeley, California.

Richard and Janet Tarlov ("Discover the Pleasures of a Cheese Course," p. 54) met over a cheese counter in San Francisco in 1992, and romance bloomed. Each had developed an expertise in cheese—Richard in France and then in New York at Dean & DeLuca and Balducci's; Janet at Zingerman's Deli in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Richard is now a manager at the Oakville Grocery in Napa Valley; Janet is the cheese and charcuterie buyer.

Clifford A. Wright ("Add Extra Flavor with Prosciutto and Pancetta," p. 60) is the author of two books on Middle East politics, five cookbooks, and two forthcoming books on Mediterranean food and history. He worked at the Brookings Institute in Washington, DC, and the Institute of Arab Studies in Cambridge, Massachusetts, before he started cooking and writing about food full-time. Cliff lives in Santa Monica, California.

Julie Sahni ("Making Indian Samosas," p. 62) wants Americans to feel the same way about Indian food as they do Italian food (that it's familiar, delicious, and easy to cook at home.) She pursues that goal by writing books, teaching classes, guiding culinary tours to India, even introducing a line of spice blends. Her cookbooks include *Classic Indian Cooking*, *Classic Indian Vegetarian Cooking*, and *Savoring Spices & Herbs* (all published by William Morrow). Julie lives in New York.

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Before softening honey in a microwave, loosen or remove the container's top.

Double the pleasure of slow-grilled turkey

I just read John Ash's article on slow-grilled turkey in *Fine Cooking* #24. While I can relate to his recipe and method, every Thanksgiving I go one better: I grill two 22-pound turkeys on twin Webers in my Manhattan backyard for 40 or so guests. First-timers can't wait for the meal to begin—advance word seems to have given the turkey an almost mythical status. All who attend swear that it's the best turkey they've ever tasted.

—H. Buff Herr, via e-mail

Honey's sweet, but it can get hot

I, too, use the microwave to soften honey, as a reader suggested in *Fine Cooking* #22 (p. 22). However, there are two safety concerns that your readers should know about.

◆ Never put any jar into the microwave if it has a metal ring around its collar.

◆ For plastic honey containers, like honey bears, always loosen or remove the plastic cap before heating in a microwave. If the honey gets too hot while the cap is secure, pressure can build, causing the container to explode and create a mess in the microwave; worse, it could explode

when you uncup it outside the oven.

—Bernard Roth,
Santa Barbara, CA

Searing meat doesn't keep it juicy

I thoroughly enjoy your magazine, but I must bring one thing to your attention; actually, it's a pet peeve of mine. On p. 35 of *FC* #20, you say "sautéing is an excellent way to caramelize chops and seal in flavor." Ouch! You can't "seal in" anything—meat does not retain juice because of sealing. Harold McGee has a good section on searing in his book, *The Curious Cook*. The last time I spoke with Mr. McGee, he mentioned that half of the chefs he talks to still think that searing seals in juices. Whenever I read this mistaken notion in a reputable publication, I'm moved to say something.

—John Paul Khoury,
Sacramento, CA

Editors' reply: Believe it or not, the notion of "sealing" is a pet peeve of ours, too, so we're glad you pointed this out to us. We've read Harold McGee's books, and we've learned the same thing from our own food scientist, Shirley Corriher. In Josh Eisen's article, we don't say anywhere that searing the

chops will seal in the juices; we do say that high-heat sautéing or searing will develop the flavor by caramelizing the chop's exterior. The phrase "seal in flavor" is a case of (gulp) sloppy editing rather than incorrect information. In effect, caramelizing the outside seals on the flavor. We'll be more precise next time because it's indeed important not to perpetuate kitchen myths.

Errata

In the recipe for Chocolate Cut-Outs in "Baking Irresistible Holiday Cookies" (*FC* #24, p. 69), we said that the cookies are done when the tops look dry and you see flaky layers when you break a cookie in half. This should take about 15 minutes.

In Tasted & Tested (*FC* #24, p. 16), we printed an incorrect phone number for Riedel wineglasses. The correct number is 516/567-7575. Our apologies.

Fine Cooking welcomes article proposals from our readers. We acknowledge all submissions, return those we can't use, and pay for articles we publish. Send proposals to Fine Cooking, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506.

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Foolproof, spongy génoise

For family birthdays, I practice my génoise cake-baking, but my family is getting tired of it. The cakes have small clots of undissolved flour and leaden bottoms. Any foolproof methods for assembling génoise?

—Sally Smith, Nashville, TN

Flo Braker replies: Here are some tips for a light, airy, tender génoise, top to bottom:

- ◆ Whip the eggs and sugar for 4 to 5 minutes to a “ribbon” consistency. The mixture should fall back into



A light, tender génoise depends on correct mixing and baking techniques.

the bowl in a ribbon-like trail and rest on the batter's surface, keeping its shape for 10 to 12 seconds. If it doesn't, keep whipping.

- ◆ Gently and thoroughly mix in the melted butter. Pour the melted butter into a small bowl, add about 1 cup of the batter to the tepid butter, and fold until combined. Return this mixture to the reserved batter and fold again.

- ◆ Sift the dry ingredients over the egg mixture. Sprinkling, rather than dumping, the dry ingredients helps with even mixing.

- ◆ Fold in the dry ingredients efficiently. With a rubber spatula, cut straight down into the batter, pulling along the bottom and up the side of the bowl nearest you; with a flick of the wrist, lift the mixture up and over itself, letting it fall gently.

Give the bowl a quarter turn with each stroke and repeat, checking that the dry ingredients are evenly distributed.

- ◆ Bake in the lower third of the oven. You'll get better heat distribution and more even baking. Always heat the oven thoroughly before you put a cake in to bake.

Flo Braker wrote *The Simple Art of Perfect Baking* (updated and revised, Chapters, 1992).

Is fish skin nutritious?

Is skin from fish like salmon and tuna something to be peeled off and feared, like chicken skin, or is it a rich source of omega-3 fatty acids—heart-healthy, as well as delicious?

—Louise Peterson, Brooklyn, NY

Cindy Snyder replies: At this point, we still know little about the omega-3 fatty acid content of fish skin. The majority of nutritional information available is for skinned, filleted fish, or for small whole fish like sardines and smelt, which are two of the richest sources of these acids.

We do know that fat is primarily deposited under the skin, so eating the skin may well help retain those omega-3 fatty acids. But there's no promise of receiving beneficial fish oils from the skin alone.

Seafood varies widely in its omega-3 fatty acid content. The easiest and best way to increase fish oil in the diet is to eat two fish

meals per week. Anchovies, black cod, herring, mackerel, all species of salmon, sardines, shark, smelt, swordfish, and bluefin tuna are all good sources of omega-3 fatty acids. Cindy Snyder is a dietitian for National Seafood Educators in Seattle.

The right way to make ghee

I've tried many times to make ghee—using different kinds of pans, as well as low heat and high—but every time I make it, the ghee fails to solidify, and I end up with a grainy, liquid mass topped with oil. What am I doing wrong?

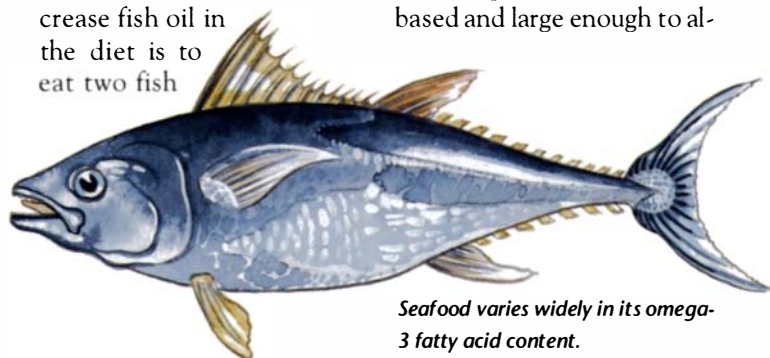
—Jeani Brent, via e-mail

Julie Sahni replies: You may be trying different methods, but the results you're getting are absolutely correct. A semisolid mass with a grainy texture is the desired texture for ghee, the Indian version of clarified butter.

Ghee simmers for longer than regular clarified butter, and the browned milk solids account for its distinct nutty aroma and beige color.

Just half a teaspoon of ghee adds lots of flavor to purées, fish, and meats. And because the milk solids are strained out, ghee's burning point is high, which makes it ideal for deep-frying and grilling.

Your pot must be heavy-based and large enough to al-



Seafood varies widely in its omega-3 fatty acid content.

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Q&A

low the melted butter to froth freely without overflowing. And the sweeter, fresher, and purer the butter, the more delicious your ghee will be.

Make ghee by melting butter over low heat and cooking it over medium heat until all the moisture evaporates and the milk solids brown. You'll be able to tell when this happens because the crackling gradually stops and the foaming tapers off. At this point, you must watch the ghee carefully and stir it constantly. When the milk solids turn brown—you'll need to push the foam aside to check—take the ghee off the heat and let the brown residue settle to the bottom of the pan.

When the ghee is cool enough to handle, strain it carefully through cheesecloth and discard the residue. Ghee

will keep in the refrigerator for four months and even longer in the freezer.

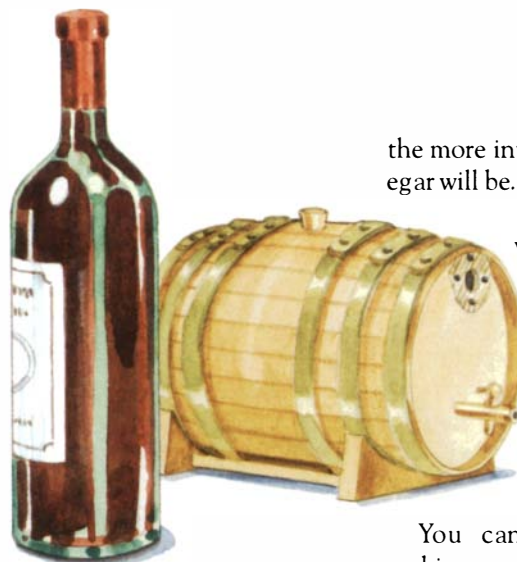
Julie Sahni is the author of Classic Indian Cooking and Savoring Spices & Herbs (William Morrow, 1980 and 1996).

Good vinegar from inexpensive wine?

I have a bottle of sparkling wine that I don't think is very good quality. Is there any chance I can turn it into good vinegar?

—Jim Hsu, via e-mail

Paul Bertolli replies: As long as the wine contains sufficient alcohol (9% to 10%) and is otherwise sound (it shouldn't smell soured, moldy, or like cork), you can make decent vinegar from it. And the wine you use must be dry, unless you want a vinegar that's sweet-sour tasting.



The more interesting the wine, the more interesting the vinegar will be.

It sounds like the wine you're talking about isn't pleasing to drink and lacks character. While the qualities you dislike in the wine will be less noticeable once it turns to vinegar, they won't completely disappear. The more interesting the wine,

the more interesting the vinegar will be.

I would advise you to try experimenting, especially since the alternatives—using the wine in cooking or pouring it away—are less desirable.

You can find vinegar-making equipment in shops that sell winemaking supplies and equipment, and through mail-order sources. I like Oak Barrel Winecraft (1443 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94702; 510/849-0400), a retailer that does mail-order, too.

Paul Bertolli is the chef and co-owner of Oliveto in Oakland, California, and a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. ♦



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Red, White, or Green, Chicory Brightens Winter Cooking

Where can a cook find brilliant color in the dull, gray days of winter? I look to the chicory family, because winter is when this vegetable really shines. Instead of buying flavorless hot-house tomatoes or pithy radishes that may be weeks out of the ground, I make delicious, bright winter salads with red radicchio, snow-white Belgian endive, and spring-green

frisée. Or I might braise, sauté, or even grill chicory for a mellower take on this crunchy, bittersweet vegetable.

CULTIVATED CHICORY IS LEAFY OR COMPACT

The chicory family embraces a broad group, from leafy escarole to tight heads of Belgian endive and radicchio. There's also wild chicory, which you see growing roadside in early spring. It's in fall and winter, though, that we bring cultivated chicories into the kitchen. These include Belgian endive,

which grows in 4- to 6-inch cylindrical heads called chicons (pronounced shih-KOHN); big, leafy heads of escarole; frisée (also called curly endive) with its fine, frizzy, almost shredded-looking leaves; and the many types of radicchio: tight, round, magenta-colored heads of rossa di Verona, elongated rossa di Treviso, and the more unusual rosettes of red-, green-, and yellow-spotted Castelfranco. All these varieties share leaves with a dense, crisp texture and a bittersweet

flavor that's delicious raw or cooked.

CHICORY IS TASTIEST IN COOLER MONTHS

Although you'll find chicories in the market year-round, they develop their best flavor in the fall and winter. Cool weather enhances their sweetness and intensifies their color.

When buying, inspect the stem ends. They



Rossa di Treviso—Treviso tastes great rubbed with olive oil, sprinkled with salt, and grilled, but heat will dull its purply-red hue.



Escarole—Try the outer leaves sautéed with garlic and olive oil, or as a pizza topping with olives and Fontina. Escarole is fine in salads, and even better braised with a little butter, stock, and a mixture of chopped celery, carrots, onions, and herbs.



Puntarelle—With leaves that look like huge dandelion stalks, puntarelle makes an especially good salad when dressed with a gutsy, garlicky vinaigrette.



Red and white Belgian endive—Try substituting it for celery in a Waldorf salad, or braising it in butter and chicken stock.

should be white, with no more than a trace of browning.

Choose frisée and escarole with firm green outer leaves. You should see no black tips or wilted leaves, and the heart should be white or pale yellow. The inner white leaves are the choicest, tender and sweet.

Look for Belgian endive with snow-white leaves. The tips may be slightly yellow, but neither white nor red endive should have any brown at the edges. Belgian endive is usually expensive because it's cultivated in two stages: first, seeds are planted and the endive is left to grow a tap root and a crown of green, scraggly leaves. The roots are harvested, the leaves trimmed off, and the roots are re-planted indoors in the dark, which forces the growth of a chicon of pale, succulent, sweet leaves. A greenish cast indicates exposure to light and means the leaves will probably taste too bitter.

CHICORY MAKES SPRIGHTLY SALADS

Any variety of chicory is exquisite in a winter salad. Chicory combines beautifully with citrus, pears, apples, and fresh sweet root vegetables like turnips and carrots.

Cut and wash leafy chicories just like lettuce. Use only the hearts and adjacent tender, light-green leaves. Save tougher outer leaves for cooking.

Clean radicchio or Belgian endive gently. Discard wilted outer leaves and wipe the heads with a damp towel. Cut out the core from the bottom and peel off the leaves one by one. Or just cut Belgian endive into thin bias strips. Belgian endive's cut edges quickly brown, so slice it just before serving.

COOKING MELLOWS CHICORY

When you cook chicory, it mellows deliciously, becoming almost another vegetable entirely. Cut Belgian endive

More at the market

Available in markets in most parts of the country, these fruits and vegetables add zing to winter food:

- ◆ **Grapefruit**, especially the Ruby Red varieties, to section and add to winter chicory salads. Try whisking some freshly squeezed juice with olive oil for a bright vinaigrette.
- ◆ **Hardy winter greens**, such as collards, dandelion greens, or kale, to steam and then sauté with olive oil and garlic. Make a warming main dish by tossing the sautéed greens with pasta, caramelized onions, bacon, and a dash of balsamic vinegar.
- ◆ **Celery root** to boil with potatoes and a few cloves of garlic for a satisfying winter mash or to slice and layer with sautéed shallots, cover with a little chicken stock, and bake as a gratin.
- ◆ **Pineapple** to chunk and toss with a little honey, grated fresh ginger, and grated orange zest for a fresh fruit dessert.

and radicchio in half, rinse and drain them thoroughly, brush them with olive oil, and throw them right on the grill. Escarole works this way, too, as long as you use only the tender hearts or very young, small heads.

Leafier chicories cook better if you blanch them first. Blanching both tenderizes and reduces leafy bulk. Use lots of boiling, salted water. Then you can grill as

above or braise. Belgian endive can be braised without the preliminary blanching.

After you buy chicory, you can store it in the refrigerator for several days, wrapped loosely in a damp towel. Keep Belgian endive in the darkness of the vegetable crisper.

Alan Tangren is the former forager for Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, California, where he's now the pastry chef. ◆



Frisée (curly endive)—The white or pale ivory heart is the sweetest, most tender part. Toss frisée with warm, chopped bacon for a classic winter salad—the sturdy leaves pair deliciously with warm dressings.



Radicchio di Castelfranco Veneto—

This is the chameleon of radicchio. No two heads are ever alike; each has its own dazzling color combination. Castelfranco adds verve to tossed salads and tastes good grilled.

Verona (or Chioggia) radicchio—

Like its cousin Treviso, Verona radicchio adds color and crunch to salads. Try it tossed with Belgian endive, toasted walnuts, and crumbled blue cheese.



New black and white rices jazz up pilafs and stir-fries

Pasta, move over. Rice is making a move to win the complex-carbohydrate wars, and Lotus Foods has introduced two varieties to the U.S.: Forbidden black rice (originally cultivated



Forbidden rice needs no soaking before cooking.

only for the Chinese emperor) and Kalijira, a baby basmati, which is known as *gobindovag* in India.

Unhulled Forbidden rice is a medium-grain black rice, much different from Thai black sticky rice. Sticky rice needs a long soak before it's steamed, while Forbidden rice cooks in about 30 minutes. Mildly nutty and pleasantly chewy with a deep,

dark color, it's an excellent base for Asian stir-fries.

Kalijira (or *gobindovag*) is a miniature basmati with seed-sized grains. Kalijira isn't starchy like other small-grain rices; rather, it cooks up fluffy like long-grain basmati. Kalijira isn't quite as richly aromatic as its grownup cousin, but it cooks in 10 minutes. I tried it in a curried vegetable ragout; it was wonderful.



Kalijira is a miniature basmati that cooks in 10 minutes.

The visual, textural, and flavor appeal of these rices justifies the price (\$4 to \$6 a pound). Call Gold Mine Natural Food Co. (800/475-FOOD) to order. —Rick Rodgers, author of *On Rice* (Chronicle, 1997)



Spray olive oil evenly with fine-misting Misto

A new kitchen tool called Misto has changed my cooking habits. I fill the cylinder with $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of my favorite olive oil, pump the cap a few times, and spray a very fine, even mist of oil onto vegetables and meat and into pans and skillets. I can now sauté with a minimum of fat, and I can put olive oil

on raw foods like chicken without cross-contamination. I especially like using Misto on bruschetta, because I make dozens when I'm catering. Now, instead of using a messy brush and bowl, I just spray a nice, even coating of the olive oil onto the bread. The \$18 for Misto is worth it; not only does it work well (and without chemical propellants), but it looks snappy on my counter, too. Call 888/OILSPRAY for information, or check specialty retail stores.

—Alex Briggs, cook, food stylist, and designer, Southport, Connecticut

OSO Sweet onions are a winter treat

I've read about sweet onions that are mild enough to eat like apples, but I always suspected the writer was stretching the truth. Certainly, the Maui and Vidalia onions I've tried haven't lived up to that claim. But I recently sampled some OSO Sweet onions from Chile and found them to be truly mild and pleasant when raw. I might not eat one out of hand, but I'd put a thick slice on a hamburger or use them in a Spanish-style orange, onion, and olive salad. Available from December through March (Chile's summer), when our domestic sweet onions are gone, this new variety will prove useful in winter salads and sandwiches. For information, call 888/878-7454 or visit ososweetonions.com.

—Janet Fletcher, author of *Fresh From the Farmers' Market* (Chronicle, 1997)



Photos except where noted: Scott Phillips

Events

FIESTA DAY

Tampa (Ybor City), Florida; February 14
Six hundred gallons of Spanish bean soup are served free, along with *café con leche* and Cuban bread. Also for sale: seafood paella (served from a 10-foot-diameter pan set up in the middle of the street) and Cuban sandwiches of ham, pork, salami, and cheese. Call 813/248-3712.

RED SNAPPER FESTIVAL

Orange Beach, Alabama; February 21
Charter-boat captains catch the abundant local red snappers for this huge fish fry, served up with hushpuppies, coleslaw, and grits. Call 334/968-6904.

MATSURI, FESTIVAL OF JAPAN

Heritage Square Park Phoenix, Arizona; February 21–22
Festive displays and demonstrations of many facets of Japanese culture. Dishes include sushi, teriyaki, *majū* (steamed dough stuffed with meat), *yaki soba* (pan-fried noodles), and more. Call 602/262-5071.

CHARRO DAYS

Brownsville, Texas; February 26 through March 1
This festival of cowboy-style Latin and Texas culture features fajitas, *mole* (an intricate sauce poured over various meats), Texas chili, salsa, tamales, tacos, *cabrito* (grilled baby goat), and *menudo* (tripe—Mexico's traditional hangover cure). Call 956/542-4245.

STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

Plant City, Florida; February 26 through March 8
Florida's strawberry season runs from December to April, culminating in a huge harvest celebration featuring strawberry desserts, drinks, baked goods, and jam. Call 813/752-9194.

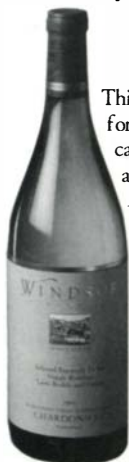
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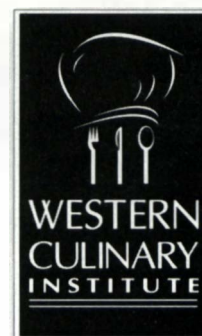
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Healthful grapeseed oil can take the heat, deliciously

Grapeseed oil, a byproduct of winemaking, isn't new—it's been around for centuries and has often been incorporated into the cuisines of the Mediterranean.

But only now is word spreading in this country about the useful and healthful properties of grapeseed oil, thanks in large part to Salute Santé, a high-quality grapeseed oil. American chefs and home cooks have embraced Salute Santé's oil for two reasons. First, its high smoking point (485°F) makes it ideal for sautéing and stir-frying. I especially like to cook thinly sliced meats quickly by searing them in grapeseed oil over high heat. Second, studies show that grapeseed oil is high in vitamin E, has the ability to raise HDL cholesterol (the "good" cholesterol), and contains high amounts of linoleic acid (also known as omega-6).

The very pale green Salute Santé has a light, nutty, slightly fruity taste, making it a perfect base for salad dressings. Attractively packaged in both cans and bottles ranging from \$7 for 8 ounces to \$15 for 33 ounces, it's available in specialty food stores. Call 415/388-7792 or visit www.salutesante.com on the Web.

—Clifford A. Wright, author of *Italian Pure & Simple: Robust & Rustic Home Cooking for Every Day* (William Morrow, fall 1998)



Consider a cordless hand blender for freedom of movement

I love my immersion blender—that trusty mixer-on-a-stick that makes it easy to purée a hot soup, mix a big batch of custard, or emulsify a vinaigrette. But the cord always seems to be in the way, dragging along behind me. So when I heard about Sanyo's new cordless hand blender, I got one to test right away.

The hand blender (\$29.95) is just one appliance in Sanyo's new cordless collection, which includes a cheese grater, a mini chopper, a can opener, and a salt and pepper mill.

Each tool runs off an innovative rechargeable battery pack (another \$29.95) that works interchangeably

with each tool. The battery pack requires a six-hour initial charge, but it will run your blender for several weeks of moderate use.

I must say I found the world of cord-free puréeing blissful, and the blender certainly had enough power to do a nice job on finishing my favorite winter soup—a curried purée of roasted apples and butternut squash. I did find the light weight of the tool a bit disconcerting; I hope this product will prove to be as long-lived as my heavier, more industrial feeling (and more expensive) immersion blender. All of Sanyo's cordless appliances come with a one-year warranty and are available in major department stores.

—Susie Middleton, associate editor for Fine Cooking



Cyberkitchen: TV chefs post recipes on Web

If you missed Mary Sue Milliken and Susan Feniger's incredible recipe for Cinnamon Chicken on their last *Too Hot Tamales* show, never fear. Find that recipe and many more from dozens of TV Food Network chefs like Michael Lomonaco, Emeril Lagasse, and Dean Fearing at www.foodtv.com (click on **recipes**).

Events

HEARD MUSEUM GUILD INDIAN FAIR & MARKET

Phoenix, Arizona; March 7–8
Demonstrations of Native American cooking and ingredients, with many tribal foods for sale, such as fry bread, parched corn, posole, acorn soup, and Hopi stew. Call 602/252-8840.

MAINE MAPLE SUNDAY

South China, Maine
March 22
More than 60 Maine sugar makers hold "open sugar-house" to let people taste syrup and see how it's made. Get free ice cream with warm maple syrup, and pickles and doughnuts to go with the "sugar on snow" (maple syrup poured on shaved ice). Call 207/445-2214.

AMITE OYSTER DAYS

Amite, Louisiana; March 27–29
With three oyster-processing plants in town, Amite is well supplied for the festival. Oysters are served fried and on the half shell, along with boiled crawfish, barbecued goat, and jambalaya. Call 504/748-5161.

EAST MAUI TARO FESTIVAL

Hana, Maui, Hawaii
March 27–29
Taro has been a Hawaiian staple since ancient times. The tubers are usually made into a sticky mash called *poi* that's served with meat, chicken, or fish. At the festival, taro is also cooked in stews or made into Portuguese doughnuts, pancakes, and chips. Call 808/248-8972.

WURSTFEST Hermann, Missouri

March 28–29
The Sausage Capital of Missouri has been making traditional German wurst since 1836. At the festival, local sausage makers, wineries, restaurants, and shops collaborate to show off their best products. Call 573/486-2313.

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Cream soups are a great canvas for garnishes. Here, croutons add a welcome crunch to broccoli soup.

AN EASY, ADAPTABLE WAY TO MAKE SOUP

When I make a “cream of” soup, I usually feature just one vegetable. But I always add some aromatics—garlic, shallots, onions, leeks—to make the flavor more complex.

The fat used to sauté the aromatics also adds flavor. Butter adds richness, bacon fat a wonderful smoky flavor, and olive oil a light, fruity note.

The thickener is added along with the liquid. For every 2 pounds of featured vegetable, I add about 6 cups of liquid. Most puréed vegetable soups call for broth, but you can use milk or water, or a combination. It’s easier to thin a soup once it has been puréed than to thicken it, so err on the side of less liquid rather than more. The potato or rice goes right into the pot with the simmering liquid.

When to add the featured vegetable depends on how long it takes to cook. Long-cooking vegetables like carrots

Creamy Vegetable Soups—Without All the Cream

Cream of vegetable soups have always been a favorite of mine. I love their satiny texture and rich flavor. I also like the fact that I can easily make a silky-smooth soup from whatever looks best at the farmers’ market (or even from what’s in my fridge or pantry) because the method is virtually the same for all vegetables: they’re cooked until tender in broth, water, or milk, thickened, and puréed.

Many traditional cream

soups are thickened with a béchamel sauce (made by stirring milk into a butter and flour roux) and finished with a good amount of cream. But all that cream, milk, and butter can make the soup feel too rich—even for me.

So to make a “cream of” soup that’s lighter but still satiny-smooth, I add a thinly sliced raw potato or ½ cup of raw rice to the pot early in the cooking. (Not only is this more

healthful, but it’s also a lot easier than making a béchamel.) As it cooks, the starch from the rice or potato helps bind and thicken the soup, giving it a creamy texture.

This thickened purée makes a perfectly fine—and truly creamless—cream of vegetable soup. But I can’t resist adding just a touch of cream. As little as a teaspoon per serving will round out and help carry the soup’s flavor and will further smooth out the texture.

Start the soup with aromatic vegetables, flavorful liquid, and a thickener



Begin by sautéing some aromatic vegetables over medium heat until soft. A base for all soups, aromatics can include onions, garlic, shallots, or leeks. If you want the flavor of a robust, resinous herb like thyme or rosemary, add it now.



Pour in the liquid and bring it to a simmer. The liquid can be broth, water, milk, or a combination. Use about 5 or 6 cups for every 2 pounds of featured vegetable.



Add the thickener—½ cup raw rice or a sliced raw potato. These starchy ingredients swell and give off starch during cooking. When the soup is puréed, they’ll make it look and feel creamy.

or turnips should be added at the same time as the starch, but quick-cooking vegetables like spinach and sorrel should be added when the starch is almost cooked (see the chart at right). This isn't an exact science, so don't worry if the starch needs a few extra minutes. Just be sure that you're able to smash the potato slices easily against the side of the pot and that the rice is plump and tender; otherwise, the purée may be grainy.

Purée the soup in a blender. For the creamiest texture, I use a blender. A food processor will give a slightly grainy texture, and a food mill will be the coarsest. If you want the soup perfectly smooth, or if the vegetable has a skin (like tomatoes) or is particularly fibrous (like artichokes), work the puréed soup through a medium mesh strainer with the back of a ladle.

The puréed soup may need to be thinned with a little extra broth, milk, or water, especially

if you're serving the soup cold (any cream soup that's served hot can also be served cold).

GARNISH FOR FLAVOR AND TEXTURE

Most cream soups are best when the flavor of the vegetable isn't blurred by too many ingredients, but herbs, spices, or cooked meats can make the soup more interesting.

◆ Fresh chopped herbs brighten the soup's flavor.

Most soups benefit from a little parsley, basil, chives, or chervil. Try the more assertive tarragon with mushroom, and dill with beet. Chopped cilantro is great in soups with southwestern ingredients, such as chiles, tomatoes, and corn.

◆ **Spices—used sparingly—add character.** Try stirring a tiny pinch of grated nutmeg into cream of asparagus, spinach, or mushroom soup. A tablespoon of curry powder, cooked with the aromatics, adds a savory backdrop that's great with butternut squash,

Vegetable timing chart

All vegetables should be diced or shredded for the quickest and most uniform cooking.

Long-cooking vegetables go in with the potatoes or rice; they're tender in about 25 minutes:

Carrots, cauliflower, fennel, garlic, onions, sweet potatoes, and other roots and tubers

Medium-cooking vegetables need 10 to 15 minutes:

Asparagus, broccoli, celery, corn, mushrooms, tomatoes, and winter squash

Quick-cooking vegetables cook in only a few minutes:

Peas, spinach, sorrel, and Swiss chard

sweet potato, and cauliflower. Fresh grated ginger simmered in a carrot or fennel soup a minute or two before the soup is puréed will give it some zing.

◆ **Some soups benefit from a splash of wine.** I love sherry in a soup of carrots or winter squash. Adding wine is an especially good trick if the finished soup tastes a little flat. Cook the soup for a couple of minutes to get rid of the alcohol. A good wine vinegar or some lemon juice will also give the soup some tang.

◆ **Flavorful meats make the soup heartier.** Stir in strips of prosciutto, crumbled cooked bacon, tiny cooked shrimp, or shredded cooked chicken after the soup has been puréed.

◆ **Don't forget the salt and pepper.** Cream soups need a good amount of salt to bring out the somewhat muted vegetable flavors.

James Peterson, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is the author of Splendid Soups (Bantam, 1992). ◆

Add the featured vegetable to the base, cook until tender, and purée



Cut the featured vegetable into even-size pieces and add at the right moment—when the time remaining for the potato or rice to cook is about how long the vegetable will take to cook (see the chart above right).



Purée the soup in batches. When the rice is plump or the potato is tender, carefully purée the soup in a blender, food processor, or food mill. For a more refined texture, pass it through a mesh strainer as well.



Add a little liquid to thin the purée if necessary. The author can't resist just a smidgen of cream for added lusciousness, though water or broth will also thin the soup. Heat the soup on the stove or chill it to serve cold.

Making Happy Matches with Wine and Cheese

Pairing wine and cheese sounds as obvious as pairing bacon and eggs. It isn't quite that easy, however, because of the vast range of flavors in both cheeses and wines. Not every cheese tastes great with every wine—in fact, some combinations can

be downright unpleasant, like a ripe, dense Cabernet Sauvignon with a pungent, young goat cheese. But here's the good news: armed with a few pointers, it's easy to make smart decisions about what to serve with what. And if you keep the following hints in

mind, you'll find yourself coming up with spot-on, delicious matches. The specific examples from the chart on p. 24 will guide you, too.

◆ **Pair high-acid wines with high-acid cheeses.** Goat's and sheep's milk cheeses are higher in acid than cow's milk cheeses, and they need high-acid wines, which are usually white wines. Also, the younger the cheese, the more acid it has: as a cheese ages, butterfat increases and acidity drops. A fresh goat's milk cheese will be highest in acidity, while an aged cow's milk cheese, like aged Parmigiano-Reggiano, will be lowest. Red

in butterfat, such as Pont l'Évêque or Munster.

◆ **Light, fruity wines go well with a wide array of cheeses.** Moderately intense cow's milk cheese, aged sheep's milk cheese, and less assertive washed-rind cheese all work well with a light, fruity wine. Here, the wine's simple fruitiness acts as a good foil for the creamy, nutty, and salty components of the cheese, and the high acidity helps curb some of the barnyard-like flavors of the cheese that can become apparent with a poor wine match.

◆ **Serve tannic red wines with rich, creamy cheeses.** Intense, tannic reds are good for drinking with soft, rich cheeses because the cheese's high butterfat content will mellow out the wine's astringent tannins. Don't mate a rich, tannic wine with a pun-



Matchmaking without fear. A big, tannic red wine might seem like a tough match, but it doesn't have to be. There's a wide range of cheeses you can serve to suit the wine—and everyone's taste—says author Larry Stone. See the chart on p. 24 for suggestions.

Goat's and sheep's milk cheeses are higher in acid than cow's milk cheeses. They need high-acid wine.

wine can work with young cheese, but only if the wine is high in acid, such as Chinon from France's Loire Valley and lighter Pinot Noirs from California.

◆ **Mate acidic white wines with crumbly textured cheese; mate lush wines with creamier cheeses.** The crisp white wines of the Loire Valley go especially well with crumbly goat cheeses (many of which come from the same area). And rich white wines such as Condrieu, Gewürtztraminer, or Viognier need creamy cheeses higher

gent, young cheese, such as goat—the tannins will make the cheese taste chalky, and the animal flavors of the cheese will leap out as an unpleasant surprise. A lush, full-bodied Cabernet or Côtes du Rhône red wants a triple-cream cheese like St. André or Explorateur.

◆ **Mate intensely flavored wines with intensely flavored cheese.** A mature Taleggio, with its full flavor and washed rind, needs an intense companion, such as a fruity, rich Amarone or a heady Zinfandel. As you'd expect,



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ENJOYING WINE

mild wines need mild cheeses.

◆ **Match complex wines with milder cheeses.** Wines with age and subtlety need a mild, soft cheese that won't overpower their nuances. Mature Bordeaux or Cabernets have a range of compatible cheeses, but you should go with a less mature cheese, or choose cheeses in the group that are naturally milder, such as Vella Sonoma Jack or a Morbier.

◆ **Young, mild, semihard and hard cow's milk cheeses are flexible wine partners.** And the wines they go with—

softer, fuller-bodied whites and light, fruity reds—are flexible cheese partners. As you'll see from the chart below, many of the cheeses that go with full-bodied white wines also go with light reds.

Larry Stone, an award-winning sommelier, is the wine director for Rubicon restaurant in San Francisco. ◆

Editors' note: To learn more about cheese, see "Discover the Pleasures of a Cheese Course," pp. 54–59.



These blues need different partners. Stilton, a full, creamy cow's milk cheese is a classic match for soft, low-acid port. Roquefort, a full, tangy sheep's milk blue, is great with a peachy Sauternes with good acidity.

Pick cheeses that suit the style of wine you're drinking

Here are some examples to guide you, but there are countless brilliant wine and cheese matches just waiting to be discovered.

Wine style

Examples

Good cheese partners

WHITE

Crisp, acidic

Premier Cru Chablis, Aligoté
Sauvignon Blanc (Loire, Italy, New Zealand)
Sémillon Blanc (New Zealand, Washington State)
Vernaccia

fresh goat's milk
Banon, Brin d'Amour, Chabichou, Laura Chenel Chèvre,
Crottin de Chavignol, Pavé Sauvage
assertive washed-rind
Epoisses, Ami du Chambertin

Sauternes type wines
Late-harvest dessert wines

salty, blue sheep's milk
Roquefort

Softer, full-bodied

Alsace (Pinot Gris, Gewürztraminer)
Burgundy (Premier and Grand Cru)
Chardonnay (California, Northern Italy)
white Grand Cru Bordeaux
white Côtes du Rhône

young cow's milk
Cheddar, mild Edam, Emmental, Gouda, Jarlsberg
medium-intense washed rind
Livarot, Maroilles, Munster, Pont l'Évêque
milder goat's milk cheese
Laura Chenel Taupinère, Humboldt Fog, Sally Jackson Chestnut,
Ste.-Maure, Valençay

RED

Light, fruity,
acidic, low-tannin

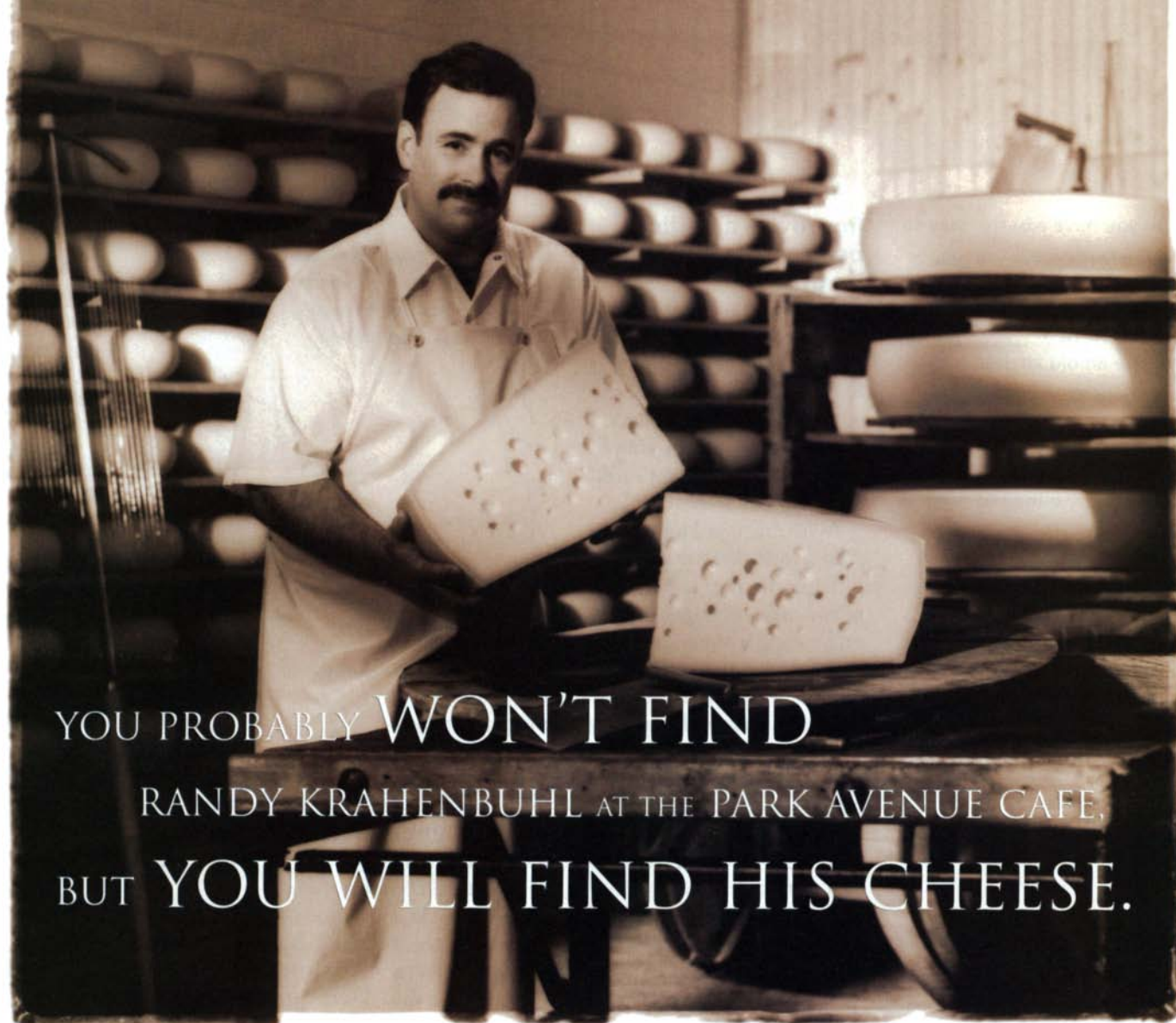
Beaujolais
Burgundy
Chianti
Chinon
light Pinot Noir
Rioja
light to medium Bordeaux
rich Pinot Noir

hard and semi-hard cow's milk
Abondance, Cantal, Cheddar, Laguiole,
St.-Nectaire, Tomme de Savoie
less assertive washed rind
Cîteaux, Pavin, Reblochon, Taleggio, Trappe
aged sheep's milk cheese
Manchego, Ossau-Iraty, Pecorino Romano, P'tit Basque

Intense, rich,
low-acid, tannic

Australian Shiraz
Bordeaux
full-bodied California Cabernet
full-bodied Côtes du Rhône
(esp. Côte-Rôtie, Hermitage)
big Zinfandel

soft double and triple cream
Brie de Melun, Camembert, Explorateur, Pierre Robert, St. André
mild washed or rubbed rind
Morbier, Port Salut, young Taleggio
extra aged hard cow's milk
Appenzell, Asiago, Beaufort, Dry Jack, Emmental, Grana Padano,
Gruyère, Parmigiano-Reggiano
extra aged sheep's milk
Manchego, Ossau-Iraty, Pecorino Romano, P'tit Basque
blue cow's milk
Bleu d'Auvergne, Shropshire Blue, Stilton

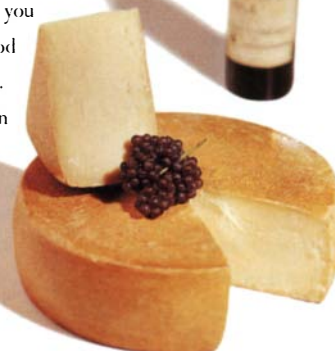


YOU PROBABLY **WON'T FIND**
 RANDY KRAHENBUHL AT THE PARK AVENUE CAFE,
 BUT **YOU WILL FIND HIS CHEESE.**



New York City is 960 miles from Monticello, Wisconsin. But watching Randy at work in his aging room, you quickly get a sense that it's not the distance that keeps him from venturing too far away — he'd simply rather be here than anywhere else. And why not? As a Master Cheesemaker, this is his art. And, this is his home. Randy grew up here, working alongside his father. Under Walter Krahenbuhl's watchful eye, Randy learned the subtle techniques of handcrafting splendid cheese. And he learned about perfection. It's a tradition of apprenticeship that continues with Randy's own son today. And while Randy is

an exceptional cheesemaker, his story is quite common. Old world heritage and unequalled quality standards have been passed from one generation of Wisconsin cheesemakers to the next for more than 150 years. Maybe that's why restaurants that share Randy's passion for excellence choose cheese from Wisconsin. Of course, you can experience the same good taste in your own kitchen. Just look for the Wisconsin name the next time you select a fine cheese.



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Taste Why

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Improvise a garlic peeler from a rubber jar gripper

Faced with the daunting task of peeling six heads of garlic for a pickle recipe, and not having purchased one of the new rubber tube peelers yet, I improvised using a simple round rubber disk that's sold as a gripper to remove jar lids.

With practice, I was able to strip several cloves at a time by putting them in the middle of the disk, folding it in half, and rolling it back and forth with both hands. As a bonus, I found a whole head could be easily broken into cloves using the same technique.

Also, rubbing cloves between your hands while wearing rubber kitchen gloves works great, too—and it eliminates sticky fingers.

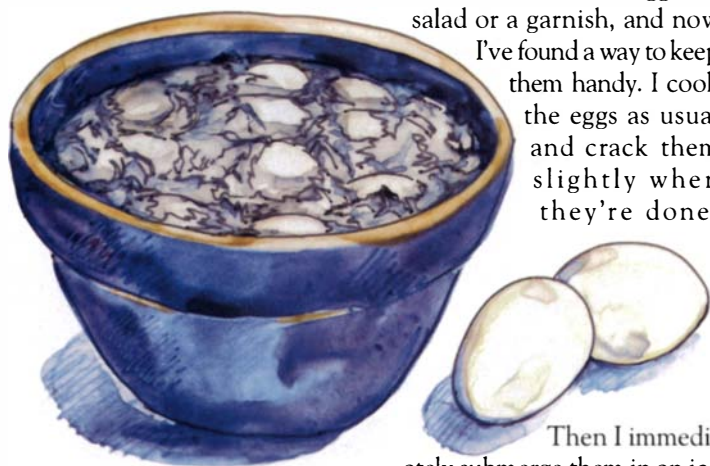
—Mickey Wilcox,
Burlington, CT

Hard-cooked eggs at the ready

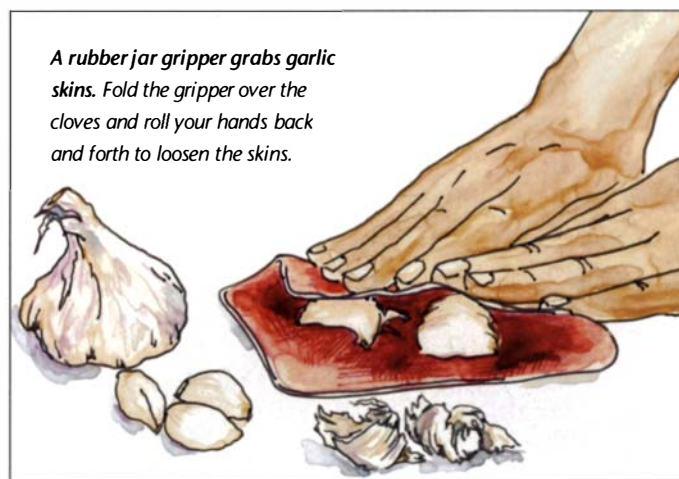
Many times I'd wished I had a chilled hard-cooked egg for a salad or a garnish, and now

I've found a way to keep them handy. I cook the eggs as usual and crack them slightly when they're done.

Then I immediately submerge them in an ice bath and put the bowl of ice water with the eggs into the refrigerator for half an hour. There's no egg odor in the fridge because the eggs are in water. When I need an egg, I remove it from the water and



Chill hard-cooked eggs in a bowl of ice water. Pop the ice bath into the fridge for odor-free storage.



A rubber jar gripper grabs garlic skins. Fold the gripper over the cloves and roll your hands back and forth to loosen the skins.

peel it. This way, I can make and store the eggs several hours in advance.

—Jane Norris,
Hilton Head, SC

A tea strainer dusts confectioners' sugar

To sprinkle confectioners' sugar on cookies or cakes, I use a mesh tea strainer. I dip the open strainer into the sugar, snap it shut, lift it out, and shake the sugar exactly where it's needed. It's easy to wash, too.

—Sandra Krist,
Edmonds, WA

Break up chocolate with an oyster knife

Most knives aren't suitable for breaking up a large block of chocolate: the blade may break if the knife isn't sufficiently sturdy. I've found that the sturdy, short blade of an oyster knife works perfectly. Hold the chocolate block firmly with one hand and the oyster knife firmly with the other. Dig the oyster knife straight down into one corner of the chocolate, and pry away small shards of the chocolate, a little at a time.

—Phyllis Kirigin,
Croton-on-Hudson, NY

Cook cabbage with a dash of vinegar

To cut down on odors when cooking cabbage, cauliflower, or other odoriferous vegetables, add a little vinegar to the cooking water.

—Faye Field, Longview, TX

Rinse basmati rice in a strainer

Basmati (fragrant long-grain rice) should be thoroughly rinsed in a bowl of cold water to remove excess starch. Usually, this takes three or four rinses until the water is no longer milky, but clear.

When I'm pouring the cold water off the rice, I often find that some of the rice winds up



An oyster knife is the perfect tool for breaking up chocolate. Use the stubby blade to pry away shards.



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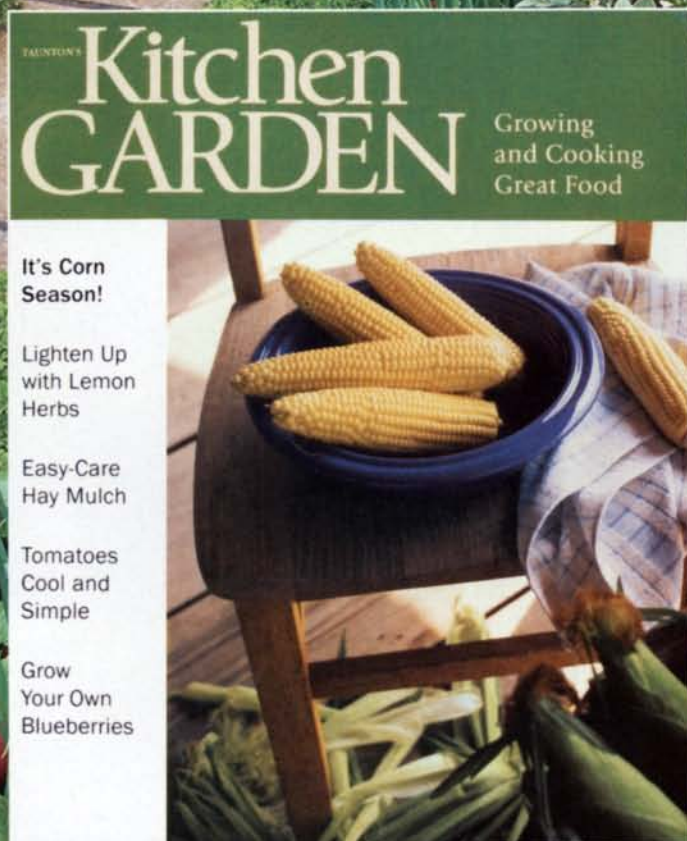
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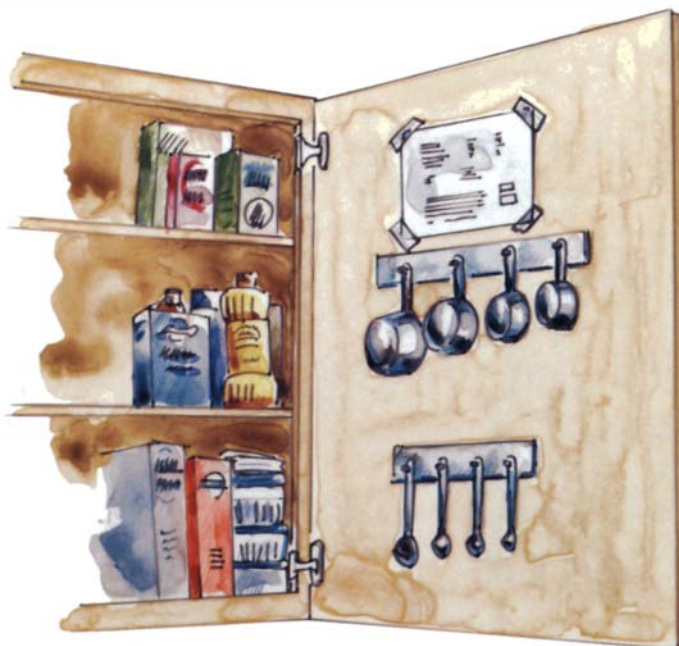
going down the drain. To avoid this and to streamline the process, I now put the rice in a wire mesh strainer and submerge the strainer in a bowl of cold water. When it's time to change the water, I simply lift out the strainer, quickly pour the water out of the bowl, refill the bowl with water, and submerge the rice-filled strainer once again.

If any particles (bran or husks) float to the top, pour them off before pulling the strainer out; otherwise they'll just end up back in the rice.

—Molly Wolf,
Wethersfield, CT

Organize your measuring tools

For handy measuring and quicker conversions, I hang a row of measuring cups on



Keep measuring tools handy on a cabinet door. Mount hooks to hang cups and spoons, and tape a chart of equivalents above the tools.

the inside of an upper cabinet door. A set of measuring spoons (that have been separated from their ring) hangs below the cups, and a table of equivalents is taped above. If

you do this, just remember to position the cups and spoons so that they won't knock against inside shelves when the cabinet door is shut.

—Jean Linton, Adell, WI

Grating horseradish without tears

Grating horseradish by hand can produce a flood of tears, and the fibers tend to jam up in a food processor's grating attachment. Here's an easy technique that works. Peel the root under cold running water and cut it into ½-inch dice with a sharp knife. Fit a food processor with the steel blade and start it. With the blade spinning, drop small handfuls of the dice down the feed tube. When all the cubes have been added, process one minute longer for finely grated horseradish. To store, add enough vinegar to make a moist paste, pack it into a jar, and seal it. It will keep this way in the refrigerator for about a week.

—Lilia Dvarionas,
Kanata, Ontario ♦

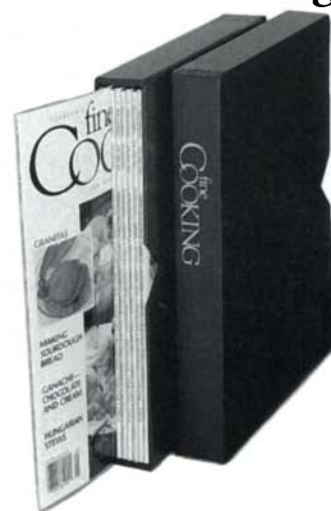
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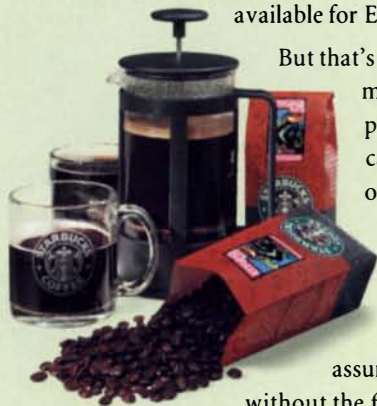
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Making Delicious Roasted Vegetables in Half the Time

Thin slices of winter vegetables, tossed in oil and herbs and spread on baking sheets, roast to perfection in less than half an hour

BY SUSIE MIDDLETON

There's something irresistible about the earthy, sweet flavor of roasted vegetables—everyone loves them. When I make a big batch at home, the leftovers mysteriously disappear from the refrigerator overnight. And around my house, roasted vegetables are especially popular in the winter—humble root vegetables and winter squashes, with all their stored sugar, are transformed into something grand by the kiss of high heat.

But most recipes for winter vegetables call for roasting them whole or in chunks. They can take an hour or so to roast, so they aren't practical for weeknight meals. I've found a way to get the same wonderfully caramelized results by thinly slicing root vegetables—and other winter vegetables like hard squashes—and roasting them on baking sheets. I get delicious, evenly cooked vegetables in less than half the time with this quick-roasting method.

The technique for quick-roasting winter vegetables is easy to master: Cut the vegetables into thin slices and toss them with olive oil, salt, and herbs. Spread the vegetables in one layer on a lined baking sheet and roast them in a 450°F oven.

In about 20 minutes, the vegetables are done—soft on the inside, brown around the edges, and super-sweet. Because the vegetables are sliced into disks, they have more surface area for caramelizing. As a bonus, these roasted vegetables look great on a plate, and they're really versatile—as delicious right out of

Pretty rings of roasted striped delicata and acorn squash, red onions, sweet potatoes, beets, turnips, and parsnips make a savory, satisfying side dish.

the oven as they are in leftovers (see the sidebar opposite).

TIPS FOR QUICK-ROASTING

Roasting thinly sliced root vegetables on baking sheets is a straightforward concept, but the following suggestions will help guarantee that your results are delicious.

You don't have to peel most vegetables that you're going to slice thinly. I like to peel carrots and parsnips, but I leave beets, turnips, sweet potatoes, and squash unpeeled. Just scrub them and trim the ends.

Have a heavy, sharp chef's knife on hand to make quick, even cuts. A flimsy knife won't cut an even slice of beet or turnip. You want slices of equal thickness, so that all the slices cook in the same amount of time. And you want thin slices (not paper-thin—just a little smaller than the width of a no. 2 pencil) so that the vegetables cook quickly.

Make sure your vegetables are well coated with oil. Start with about two tablespoons of oil per pound of vegetables; you may need to add a little more. A thorough coating of oil traps moisture and also helps the vegetables to caramelize. If it looks like too much oil, just leave the excess in the bowl when you trans-



Cut the vegetable into thin slices, just a shade narrower than the width of a pencil.



Toss the slices with oil, salt, and hardy herbs like sage or rosemary. Spread on a baking sheet, leaving plenty of room, and roast at 450°F for about 20 minutes.

fer the veggies to the baking sheet. I like to use a blend of vegetable and olive oils; use your favorite oil, and just be sure it's really fresh.

Add kitchen parchment to your pantry supplies. Your vegetables will never stick to parchment, and you can slide the parchment right off the baking sheet for easy cleanup. If you do line your baking sheets with foil, brush them with a little extra oil to guard against sticking. A rimmed baking sheet or a jelly roll pan keeps drops of oil from running off the sides.

How to slice and season winter vegetables for quick-roasting

<i>Vegetable</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>What to trim, how to slice</i>	<i>Toss with</i>	<i>Time to cook at 450°F</i>	<i>Side dish portions</i>
beets	1 pound (about 3 medium)	leave unpeeled, scrub root, cut off ends, slice $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch thick	2 Tbs. oil $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 tsp. kosher salt $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 Tbs. fresh herbs	18 minutes	3 to 4
carrots	1 pound (about 5 large)	trim ends, peel, slice on sharp diagonal $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch thick	2 Tbs. oil $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 tsp. kosher salt $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 Tbs. fresh herbs	18 minutes	3 to 4
celery root	1½ pounds (about 1 medium)	trim ends, cut away all thick skin, cut bulb in half, slice $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick	2 Tbs. oil $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 tsp. kosher salt $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 Tbs. fresh herbs	18 minutes	2
red onions	1 pound (about 3 small)	trim ends, peel, slice $\frac{1}{4}$ - to $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch thick	2 Tbs. oil 1 tsp. kosher salt $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 Tbs. fresh herbs	22 to 24 minutes	2 to 3
parsnips	1 pound (about 4 large)	trim ends, peel, slice on sharp diagonal $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch thick	2 Tbs. oil $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 tsp. kosher salt $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 Tbs. fresh herbs	20 to 22 minutes	2 to 3
red potatoes	1 pound (3 to 4 small)	leave unpeeled, scrub, slice $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch thick	2 Tbs. oil 1 tsp. kosher salt $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 Tbs. fresh herbs	20 to 22 minutes	2 to 3
sweet potatoes	1½ pounds (2 medium)	leave unpeeled, scrub root, slice $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick	2½ Tbs. oil 1 tsp. kosher salt 1 Tbs. fresh herbs	20 to 22 minutes	4
turnips	1 pound (about 3 small)	leave unpeeled, scrub root, cut off ends, slice $\frac{1}{8}$ - to $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch thick	2 Tbs. oil $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 tsp. kosher salt $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 Tbs. fresh herbs	25 minutes	2
winter squash	1 pound (about 2 small acorn or 3 delicata)	trim ends, cut horizontally into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch slices, cut seeds away by running a paring knife around inside of rings	2½ Tbs. oil 1½ tsp. kosher salt 1 Tbs. fresh herbs	20 to 22 minutes	3 to 4



Test for softness with the tip of a knife. These sweet potatoes are tender inside, browned and caramelized outside.

Use hardy herbs like sage, oregano, thyme, and rosemary. I leave thyme leaves whole and roughly chop sage and oregano. I like to finely chop rosemary leaves so no one gets a spiky surprise. I prefer the variety of rosemary with bright, shiny green leaves, which are grayish on the back. This moister rosemary has a gentler flavor than the piny, sharp leaves of rosemary “skewers” sold in the grocery store.

Don't crowd the vegetables or they'll steam. A pound of most winter vegetables, after trimming and slicing, will fit on a large baking sheet. If you want to cook several different vegetables in smaller amounts, they can share a baking sheet. When the first vegetable is done, remove the pan from the oven, slide the cooked slices off with a spatula or tongs, and return the rest to the oven to finish cooking. Or use two or three smaller baking pans.

Flip the vegetables over with tongs or a spatula halfway through the cooking time, if you want. The vegetables will brown most on the bottom from the heat of the baking sheet. You can turn the vegetables over for more even browning, but you certainly don't have to.

Follow the chart at left to start quick-roasting vegetables. You may find that your oven is a little slow or a little fast, and that you want your vegetables cooked a little more or a little less.

Master Recipe for Quick-Roasting Winter Vegetables

Follow the chart at left to trim, slice, coat, and cook the vegetables. To roast less than a pound of vegetables, adjust the oil, salt, and herbs accordingly. *Servings vary.*

1 lb. or more vegetable of choice (sliced as described in chart) about 2 Tbs. vegetable or olive oil (see chart) about ½ tsp. kosher salt (see chart) about 1 Tbs. fresh thyme, oregano, or sage (roughly chopped) or rosemary (finely chopped)

Heat the oven to 450°F. Combine the sliced vegetables, oil, salt, and herbs in a bowl. Toss to coat thoroughly. Arrange the vegetables in a single layer without crowding on a large parchment- or foil-lined rimmed baking sheet. Roast until soft on the inside (test with the tip of a knife or a wooden skewer) and browned on the outside (check the bottoms). If you like, flip the vegetables halfway through cooking. Serve warm or at room temperature, or with dressings suggested in the sidebar at right.

Susie Middleton is an associate editor for Fine Cooking. ♦

Turn quick-roasted vegetables into side dishes, salads, and main dishes

Roasted winter vegetables are really versatile—one type can make a simple side dish; a whole medley can take a starring role in a main dish. And when leftovers survive, you're really in luck. Here are some ways to make the most of roasted vegetables:

JUST OUT OF THE OVEN ...

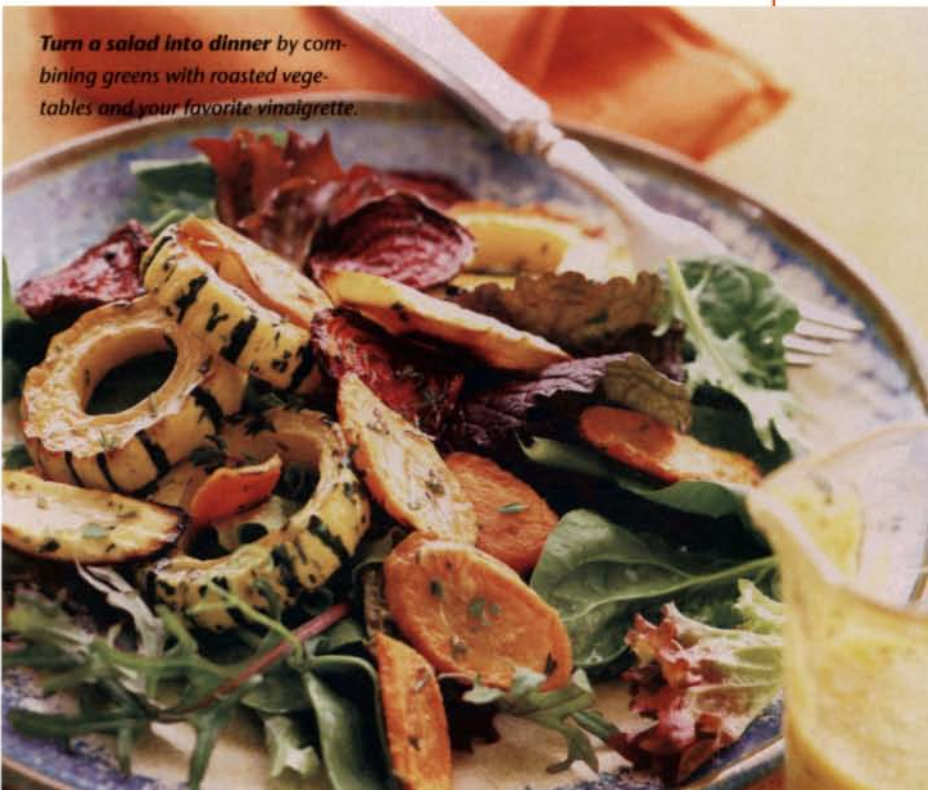
- ♦ Mound vegetables separately on a big platter; everyone can eat what he or she likes best.
- ♦ Arrange roasted roots on warm dinner plates as a bed for juicy slices of roast lamb, pork, or beef pot roast.
- ♦ Make a warm salad by lightly wilting spinach in a pan with sautéed onions or garlic, deglazing with balsamic vinegar, and mounding the vegetables over the spinach.
- ♦ For a terrific main dish, pair the vegetables with pasta—linguine, fettuccine, or pappardelle—and a light sauce of hot chicken stock, enriched with a little butter and grated Parmigiano-Reggiano.
- ♦ Serve roasted sweet potatoes or winter squash with melted sweet butter and chopped toasted pecans.
- ♦ After cooking, toss and serve roasted roots with a bit of chopped fresh parsley or lemon zest, or a splash of your

favorite nut oil or vinegar or both.

- ♦ For a delicious all-vegetable dinner, serve each person a plate of mashed potatoes surrounded by a medley of roasted vegetables.

... AND THE NEXT DAY

- ♦ Dress leftover roasted roots with your favorite winter vinaigrette (try a splash of apple cider in it) for a delicious salad.
- ♦ Mound roasted beets on a bed of frisée, mesclun, or Bibb lettuce, sprinkle with toasted hazelnuts and crumbled blue cheese, and dress with a squeeze of lemon and a drizzle of olive oil.
- ♦ Mix roasted vegetables with cooked rice or barley and a bit more salt, pepper, and herbs for a quick pilaf.
- ♦ In a shallow bowl, pour steaming beef or chicken broth around a mound of cooked rice or other grain and roasted carrots, parsnips, and turnips for an easy, hearty, soup.



Turn a salad into dinner by combining greens with roasted vegetables and your favorite vinaigrette.



Sesame-Lemon Chicken gets extra crunch from flaky phyllo layers.



Hot from the oven. These garlicky chicken breasts get a kick from a crunchy crumb-basil coating.





Crisp-Coated Chicken is Crunchy Outside, Juicy Inside

Boost the flavor and texture of boneless chicken breasts with savory marinades, crisp coatings, and high-heat roasting



Parmesan-Crumbed Chicken is simple and delicious.

BY ELIZABETH TERRY


My youngest daughter, Celeste, once asked if she could bring her entire softball team to my restaurant, Elizabeth on 37th, for an end-of-season dinner. Of course I said yes because I'm really honored that my children are proud of my work. For this occasion, Celeste described the menu to her 25 teammates and coaches, and they chose a crispy pecan-crusted chicken breast for the dinner. Their party was a great success—the dining room rang with laughter, and the chef even got a round of applause. I'm happy to say all the plates came back empty.

I must admit, in 17 years of running my restaurant, nothing has been more popular than my chicken specialties. My technique of coating boneless chicken breasts is ideal for the home cook who lives in dread of dull and dry chicken. Marinating the breasts, rolling them in a kicky crumb or cracker mixture (or even phyllo), and roasting them in a hot oven keeps the breasts juicy inside, crunchy outside, and full of flavor. Once you've tried the recipes here, you can apply this technique using your own marinades and coatings assembled from pantry and refrigerator staples.

SHOP FOR FRESH CHICKEN AND STOCK UP ON PANTRY STAPLES

When you're shopping, remember that all chicken breasts are not created equal. Many have been frozen.

Choose a package of fresh chicken breasts that isn't too "juicy"—water is a sure sign of thawing. If



Pecans, dried cranberries, and fresh ginger spice up the cracker crust of this Orange-Curry Chicken.

your grocery store carries locally raised chicken, always choose it over mass-produced chicken; it's bound to be fresher. I look for medium-size, uniform breasts that will cook in the same amount of time.

The other ingredients aren't exotic, and you can make substitutions. Keep your pantry stocked with crackers and nuts. You can use your favorite cracker; just keep the salt content in mind. I like Weston Red Oval wheat crackers for cracker crusts because of their nutty taste and snappy texture. Chopped almonds, walnuts, pecans, and sesame seeds are all good in these crusts, and where I've called for dried cranberries, any small dried fruits would work. When you have good-quality leftover bread, make your own breadcrumbs and store them in the freezer.

A MARINADE BINDS CRUMBS TO MEAT; A HOT OVEN HELPS KEEP IN JUICES

Crumb-coating chicken is a quick four-step process.

◆ **Combine the marinade ingredients and marinate the chicken for an hour**, or more if it suits your schedule. If you're short on time, simply dredge the chicken first in the marinade and then in the coating. Because these marinades are thick, they'll adhere to the breasts and to the coatings, providing another layer of flavor. Just don't wipe them off.

The crunchy coatings trap the chicken's juices inside.

◆ **Combine the coating ingredients.** You can do this an hour or two in advance. Use a food processor or chop by hand. A processor is usually handier, but I also find that chopping ingredients by hand makes a coarser, more texturally interesting coating. Experiment and decide for yourself.

◆ **Coat each breast thoroughly in the crumb mixture.** Arrange the breasts on a baking sheet or rack (a rack allows air to circulate around the breasts so they cook evenly; the direct heat of a sheet will make a crisper bottom crust). You can do this an hour or so ahead and refrigerate them until 10 or 15 minutes before you roast, if you like.

◆ **Cook the chicken in a very hot—450°F—oven.** The marinades for the crumbed breasts all use binders (yogurt, eggs, mustard), which allow the coating to adhere to the chicken and instantly form a crust when exposed to the hot, dry heat of a 450°F oven. Once that crust forms, the juices that keep the meat moist are trapped inside. Check the chicken after 10 or 15 minutes. If it's getting too brown, reduce the heat to 400°F and add 5 minutes to the total cooking time.

You'll notice that one of the recipes calls for a phyllo crust rather than a crumb coating. I like the look and papery texture of phyllo and the extra crunch of the sesame seeds combined with the flavorful marinade. No complicated work is involved here: I simply wrap strips of phyllo around the middle of a chicken breast.

Scoop and pat for an even coating



Use two hands for neat work. Take a breast from the marinade with one hand—this is now your “wet” hand. Don't wipe off the marinade. Lay the chicken on the crumbs.



Scoop and pat the crumbs over the breast using your other hand (your “dry” hand) patting until both sides are thoroughly coated. Put the breast on a buttered baking sheet or rack and repeat with the remaining breasts.

Parmesan-Crumbed Chicken

A simple Parmesan and breadcrumb mixture gives these breasts a crunchy coating and keeps them moist inside. Serves six.

FOR THE CHICKEN:

6 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 6 oz. each)
6 Tbs. Dijon-style mustard
1 Tbs. white wine or water
¾ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE COATING:

1 cup freshly grated Parmesan
1 cup fresh English muffin (or sandwich bread) crumbs
Freshly ground black pepper
4 Tbs. melted butter

For the chicken—Rinse the breasts and pat them dry. In a shallow bowl, whisk together the mustard, wine, salt, and pepper and add the chicken. The chicken can be coated immediately or held in the refrigerator for up to 2 hours.

For the coating—In a large, shallow dish, mix the cheese, breadcrumbs, and pepper. Drizzle the melted butter over the crumb mixture and toss until well combined.

To coat and cook the chicken—Heat the oven to 450°F and butter a baking sheet or rack. Follow the directions in the photos at left for coating the chicken. Roast the

chicken until it's crisp, browned, and cooked through, 25 to 30 min. Check after 15 min. If the chicken is getting too brown, reduce the heat to 400° and add 5 min. to the total cooking time.

Orange-Curry Chicken with a Pecan Crust

Dried cranberries and fresh ginger add unexpected zing to this pecan-cracker crust. *Serves six.*

FOR THE MARINADE AND CHICKEN:

1 tsp. curry powder
1 Tbs. unsalted butter
1 tsp. minced orange zest
juice (and any pulp) of 1 orange
1/3 cup plain yogurt
6 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 6 oz. each)

FOR THE COATING:

1 1/2 cups well-crushed cracker pieces (about 16 crackers)
1 tsp. salt
1/3 cup finely chopped dried cranberries or raisins
2 tsp. minced fresh ginger
4 1/4 oz. (1 cup) finely chopped pecans
4 Tbs. melted butter

For the marinade—In a small, dry sauté pan, warm the curry powder over medium heat until it perfumes the air, about 1 min. Turn off the heat, add the butter, and stir until the butter is melted. In a nonreactive bowl, mix the curry butter, orange zest, juice, and yogurt. Rinse the breasts, pat them dry, and put them in the marinade, turning to coat. Cover the bowl with plastic and refrigerate for 1 to 4 hours.

For the coating—In large, shallow dish, combine the crackers, salt, cranberries, ginger, and pecans. Drizzle the melted butter over the mixture and toss to combine.

To coat and cook the chicken—Heat the oven to 450°F and butter a baking sheet or rack. Follow the directions in the photos at left for coating the chicken. Roast the chicken until it's crisp, browned, and cooked through, 25 to 30 min. Check after 15 min. If the chicken is getting too brown, reduce the heat to 400° and add 5 min. to the total cooking time.

Garlic Chicken with a Crunchy Chip-Basil Crust

Yes, I admit, there really are potato chips in this recipe. They make the crust extra crunchy. *Serves six.*

FOR THE MARINADE AND CHICKEN:

6 Tbs. olive oil
2 Tbs. minced garlic
1/2 tsp. cayenne
3 Tbs. Dijon-style mustard
1/2 cup chopped fresh basil
6 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 6 oz. each)

FOR THE COATING:

One 6-oz. bag potato chips, crushed
1 cup well-crushed cracker pieces (about 10 crackers)
1/2 cup roughly chopped basil
1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
2 Tbs. melted butter

For the marinade—In a nonreactive bowl, combine the olive oil, garlic, cayenne, mustard, and basil. Rinse the chicken breasts, pat them dry, and add them to the marinade; turn to coat. Cover and refrigerate for 1 to 4 hours.

For the coating—In a large, shallow dish, mix the chips, crackers, basil, and pepper. Drizzle the melted butter over the crumb mixture and toss until well combined.

Wrap with phyllo for a delicate crunch



An elegant wrap. Remove a breast from the marinade and let some of the marinade drip off. Lay the breast at one end of a strip of phyllo and roll it up, leaving the ends exposed.



Dip both ends of the chicken into the sesame seeds to coat. Put the breast, phyllo seam down, on the buttered baking sheet; repeat with other breasts. Brush the tops of the phyllo with butter before roasting.

To coat and cook the chicken—Heat the oven to 450°F and butter a baking sheet or rack. Follow the directions in the photos at left for coating the chicken. Roast the chicken until it's crisp, browned, and cooked through, 25 to 30 min. Check after 15 min. If the chicken is getting too brown, reduce the heat to 400° and add 5 min. to the total cooking time.

Sesame-Lemon Chicken with a Crisp Phyllo Crust

These breasts have a crinkly, golden phyllo crust and a nutty flavor from the toasted sesame seeds. *Serves six.*

FOR THE CHICKEN AND MARINADE:

6 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 6 oz. each)
3 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
2 Tbs. soy sauce
3 Tbs. honey
2 Tbs. vegetable oil
1 clove garlic, minced
2 tsp. minced fresh ginger
Pinch cayenne
1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
1 egg white

FOR THE COATING:

4 sheets phyllo dough (defrosted completely in the package; don't open the box until ready to use)
4 Tbs. melted butter; more butter for the baking sheet
1/2 cup sesame seeds, toasted

For the marinade—Rinse the chicken breasts, pat them dry, and make a few slashes in each. Combine the marinade ingredients in a nonreactive bowl and add the chicken. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 4 hours or overnight.

To coat and cook the chicken—Heat the oven to 450°F and butter a baking sheet. Butter a sheet of phyllo, top with another sheet, butter that and repeat with the other two sheets. Cut the phyllo stack into 6 equal strips. Follow the directions in the photos above for wrapping the breasts and dipping the ends in the seeds. Set the prepared breasts on a buttered baking sheet and roast them until crisp, browned, and cooked through, 25 to 30 min.

Elizabeth Terry is the chef/owner of Elizabeth on 37th in Savannah, Georgia. ♦

Better-Than-Ever Mashed Potatoes

Mash them until chunky or silky-smooth, and then add tangy buttermilk, fruity olive oil, or a handful of fresh, fragrant herbs



*Chopped parsley
brightens the flavor
of mashed potatoes.
Add it just before serving
to keep it green and
fresh tasting.*

BY JOSH EISEN

Mashed potatoes have been one of my favorite foods since childhood. As a kid, I loved their flavor, their texture, and, perhaps most important for an eight-year-old, I loved the way I could mold them into mountains before I ate them. I still love mashed potatoes. And though I no longer play with them once they're on my plate (that torch has been passed to my son), I do like to play with the way I make my mashed potatoes—silky-smooth and buttery for an elegant meal one night, or smashed with a hand masher and mixed with buttermilk for a more homey feel another.

The basic method for making mashed potatoes is simple: boil some potatoes, mash them, and then add some fat and liquid for flavor and texture. But because there are so many ways to tinker with the basic method—from the kind of potato you use, to the liquid and fat you add, to how you mash them—you can have fun trying all kinds of delicious variations.

RUSSETS MASH SMOOTHEST, BUT YUKON GOLDS ARE MORE FORGIVING

The best mashed potatoes are made from potatoes with a high starch content. If



Author Josh Eisen has a handle on how to make delicious mashed potatoes.

it's a silky-smooth purée you're after, choose the high-starch russets, also called Idahoes or Burbanks. Then treat the potatoes carefully. Roger Vergé, the renowned French chef who's a master of mashed potatoes, abides by these strict rules when mashing starchy potatoes: peel them just before cooking (or they'll harden); cook them until just tender (don't let them fall apart); drain them

without waiting (or they'll become gluey); and serve them immediately (they don't take well to sitting around or reheating).

I follow all of Vergé's rules when I want a refined feel to my mashed potatoes, as in my Smooth & Silky Potato Purée. But I also enjoy more homey styles, like coarsely mashed potatoes flavored with olive oil and herbs, that are delicious and definitely less finicky to prepare. For these recipes, I usually use the more forgiving and flavorful Yukon Gold potatoes. Because they contain slightly less starch than russets, they'll be less silky, but they'll hold better and can be successfully reheated when we're ready to eat. (And with a toddler in the house, dinner preparation can take unpredictable turns.) Yukon Golds also have a lovely golden color and a slightly nutty flavor.

Cook the potatoes in plenty of salted water until tender. Like most cooks, I usually start the potatoes in cold water. But I sometimes speed the process along by putting the water on the stove as I peel the potatoes, and it doesn't seem to affect the results. "Cold is not the vitally strategic word," says food scientist Shirley Corriher. "Starting the potatoes in moderately warm water won't affect the outcome." Just don't start with hot water, or the outsides of the potatoes will cook before the insides are tender.

As for salt, add it right at the start. The potatoes need to cook in salted water to

Get off to a good start for the tastiest mashed potatoes



Even-size pieces ensure even cooking. Peeling the potatoes and cutting them up makes them cook faster.



The potatoes are cooked when you don't feel any resistance when you poke them with a skewer or a knife. Err on the side of overcooking, which can be remedied, rather than undercooking, which can't.



A food mill practically guarantees lump-free mashed potatoes. For a more homey feel, use a good manual hand masher. Liquids are added next so the starch can absorb and swell.



Celery root gives these potatoes a hint of earthy celery flavor. Other root vegetables and tubers—parsnips, sweet potatoes, even rutabagas—are also delicious mashed with the potatoes.

accentuate their flavor. And though it's true that unsalted water will boil more quickly, if you're afraid you'll forget to add salt later, add it at the beginning.

The potatoes are done when a knife or skewer can penetrate to the center. If the pieces of potato offer a little resistance at the core, keep cooking. Though you don't want to overcook them (they'll fill with water and become soggy), it's better to err on the side of too soft—underdone, gritty mashed potatoes are even less appealing. When I've mistakenly overcooked my potatoes, I don't add any liquid as I'm mashing until I'm sure the potatoes need it. You can also dry out slightly overcooked, soggy potatoes by draining them, returning them to the pot, and cooking them over low heat to evaporate some of the liquid. Stir them gently and proceed with your recipe once they feel drier.

How to mash? I use a food mill, a sort of mechanical sieve, when I want perfectly smooth mashed potatoes. A ricer works well, too, but I find the food mill easier to handle. A manual masher won't get the potatoes as smooth, but it's great when you want a more homey feel. If you're careful, you can whip the potatoes with a hand mixer, but don't use a food processor or the potatoes will break down and be better suited for hanging wallpaper.

DIFFERENT FATS AND LIQUIDS GIVE DIFFERENT RESULTS—ALL OF THEM DELICIOUS

Mashed potatoes are great carriers of flavor and they can support a wide range of savory additions. For the liquid, you can use some of the cooking water, milk, cream, or buttermilk, which gives the potatoes a fresh tanginess. For the fat, try butter, olive oil, or duck fat (if you're lucky enough to have some in the fridge). Each fat imparts its own distinct flavor while also releasing and carrying the flavors of the potatoes and any other ingredients. Because fats also coat and moisten foods, the more fat you add to mashed potatoes, the silkier they become.

Almost any root vegetable can be mashed along with the potatoes with great results. Some of my favorite additions are celery root, turnips, rutabagas, and parsnips. I generally use equal weights of potatoes and other root vegetables.

I also love the perfume and flavor imparted to mashed potatoes by garlic and fresh herbs such as parsley, basil, and chives. Other wonderful additions to mashed potatoes include chopped olives, roasted garlic, and—if you're feeling luxurious—truffles.

A final thought: when seasoning your mashed potatoes, don't skimp on the salt. I don't know where it goes, but it seems to disappear even if the potatoes have to sit for just a minute.

Smooth & Silky Potato Purée

To be at their best, these smooth and refined potatoes must be prepared at the last minute and served right away. *Serves four.*

2 lb. russet potatoes, peeled and cut into 2-inch cubes
2 Tbs. salt; more for seasoning
½ cup hot whole milk
Pinch freshly grated mace or nutmeg
Freshly ground white pepper to taste
7 oz. (14 Tbs.) unsalted butter, cut into pieces

Put a large pot of water on high heat. Add the potatoes and salt and bring to a boil. Boil just until a skewer or knife can easily penetrate the center of the potatoes, 20 to 30 min. Drain the potatoes. Pass them through the fine disk of a food mill back into the pot in which they were cooked. Immediately add the milk, mace, salt, and pepper, stirring with a wooden spoon. Add the butter and stir vigorously until the butter is incorporated and the potatoes look almost glossy. Serve immediately.



Potato & Celery Root Purée

There's nothing like the rich flavor of these potatoes laced with the heady, earthy fragrance of celery root. *Serves four.*

1¼ lb. celery root, peeled and cut into 2-inch cubes
2 Tbs. salt; more for seasoning
1 lb. Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into 2-inch cubes
3 oz. (6 Tbs.) unsalted butter, cut into pieces
Freshly ground white pepper to taste

Put a large pot of water on high heat. Add the celery root and salt and bring to a boil. When the water has been boiling for 10 min., add the potatoes. Cook just until a skewer can easily penetrate the center of the potatoes and the celery root, 30 to 35 min. total.

Draw off about 1 cup of the cooking liquid and set it aside. Drain the potatoes and



A few lumps give these mashed potatoes a homey feel. A little buttermilk adds a mellow yet slightly tangy note.

*2 cloves garlic, peeled and cut in half if large
2 oz. (4 Tbs.) unsalted butter, cut into pieces
1/3 cup buttermilk
1/4 cup cream
Freshly ground black pepper to taste*

Put a large pot of water on high heat. Add the potatoes, salt, and garlic and bring to a boil. Boil just until a skewer can easily penetrate the center of the potatoes, 20 to 30 min. Draw off about 1 cup of the cooking liquid; set aside. Drain the potatoes, return them to the pot in which they were cooked, and mash them with a potato masher, leaving them slightly lumpy. Add the butter, buttermilk, cream, salt, and pepper. Gently mix the ingredients into the potatoes with a wooden spoon. Bring the mashed potatoes to the consistency you like by adding a little cooking water if necessary. Season with more salt and pepper if needed and serve.

Mashed Potatoes with Olive Oil & Parsley

The parsley and olive oil make these mashed potatoes feel fresh, light, and lovely. When I'm serving more hearty fare, such as lamb, I'll add 1/3 cup chopped oil-cured olives, and a little fresh thyme and garlic heated in the olive oil to the mix. To keep the parsley fresh-tasting and green, add it just before serving. If adding olives, do the same or they'll color the potatoes. *Serves four.*

*2 lb. Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into 2-inch cubes
2 Tbs. salt; more for seasoning
1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 cup cooking liquid or milk; more as needed
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
1/4 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley*

Put a large pot of water on high heat. Add the potatoes and salt and bring to a boil. Boil just until a skewer or knife can easily penetrate the center of the potatoes, 20 to 30 min.

When the potatoes are done, draw off about 1 cup of the cooking liquid; set aside. Drain the potatoes and return them to the pot in which they were cooked. Mash them with a potato masher. With a wooden spoon, stir in the olive oil. Add some of the cooking liquid or milk until you reach the desired consistency. Season generously with salt and several grinds of black pepper.

Just before serving, check the consistency of the potatoes and add a little of the cooking liquid if they need loosening. Mix in the parsley. Taste and adjust seasonings.

Josh Eisen is a food and wine consultant and writer who lives and cooks in New York City with his wife (who photographed this article) and their son, who loves his father's mashed potatoes. ♦

celery root and pass them through the fine disk of a food mill back into the pot in which they were cooked. Mix in a couple of tablespoons of the cooking liquid to loosen the mixture. Using a wooden spoon, mix in the butter. Bring the mashed potatoes to the consistency you like by adding a little more cooking water, if necessary. Season with salt and pepper and serve.

Buttermilk Mashed Potatoes

These are purposely lumpy and make me dream of crispy, batter-fried chicken. The buttermilk adds a slightly tangy note that somehow lightens the potatoes. These hold well and need little additional liquid when reheated. *Serves four.*

*2 lb. Yukon Gold potatoes, skins on, cut into 2-inch cubes
2 Tbs. salt; more for seasoning*



Serve these silky-smooth potatoes right away. This refined version—made with russets, puréed through a food mill, and loaded with butter—tastes wonderful but doesn't keep or reheat well.





Bouillabaisse Stars in a Menu Inspired by Provence

Fragrant with herbs and saffron and brimming with seafood, this classic soup makes a warming winter meal

BY PAUL BERTOLLI

MENU

Artichoke Torta



Bouillabaisse
with Rouille



Walnut
Frangipane Tart

A meal in a bowl. Hearty bouillabaisse, chock full of seafood and fragrant with herbs and saffron, makes a wonderful weekend supper to share with friends.

Bouillabaisse is the south of France in a bowl, perhaps the most evocative expression of its people, sea, and soil. It's no wonder that there are as many recipes for bouillabaisse as there are cooks, and an equal amount of controversy about how to make it. Originally a fisherman's soup, bouillabaisse was made at seaside with the less commercially desirable portions of the day's catch. The fish were boiled over a wood fire in a pot with water, wine, aromatics, and perhaps tomatoes, potatoes, and saffron.

Where I live in northern California, I have my own tradition of making bouillabaisse: a weekend-long celebration with family and friends that includes foraging in tidepools and fishing the reefs at low tide. Catching our own fish makes the resulting soup an experience that mixes friendship with the pleasures of gathering, preparing, and eating food in an unforgettable way. Though bouillabaisse originated in a distant ocean, it's a soup that adapts to any place where fresh fish and good cooks are found.

GREAT BOUILLABAISSE STARTS WITH GREAT STOCK

To make bouillabaisse (pronounced BOO-

yuh-BESS), you first make a rich fish stock, to which you add a fragrant mixture of vegetables, herbs, and seasonings, creating a full-flavored broth. Into the broth go fresh fish and shellfish and olive oil. The primary fish stock is made from fish heads, carcasses, and trimmings along with dry white wine, vegetables, herbs, and garlic. A well-made, flavorful fish stock is an irreplaceable ingredient in bouillabaisse, yielding a broth rich with body and savor.

A big pot for a big soup. To make the fish stock, and later the bouillabaisse, you'll need a large pot with a heavy base and a wide surface area (13 quarts is a good size for eight to sixteen servings). The fish bones, heads, and trimmings you use for the primary stock require a fair amount of space, at least until the heat breaks them down to a manageable mess.

You'll also need a sieve to strain the fish bones and vegetables from the stock. A chinois (sheen-WAH)—a metal, conical sieve with a conical wooden pestle—is the best tool for this, since it allows you to not only drain the liquid but to push with enough force to extract all the flavor you can from the solids.

Olive oil adds a smooth, fruity finish. Make your bouillabaisse as close to the

time you will eat as possible; its clean, fresh taste fades over time. After the fish and other ingredients are added to the broth, olive oil is added and the soup is brought to a rapid boil. If the oil and water are in proper proportion and if the fish have added enough natural gelatin to the broth to act as an emulsifier, the broth becomes emulsified. But an emulsified broth isn't required for a great bouillabaisse: olive oil is simply a delicious addition to this soup.

SELECT A WIDE RANGE OF FISH

Your bouillabaisse will vary every time you make it, according to the type of fish available. No one or particular combination of fish is essential: you just need a mix of fish that work well in soup. These include white-fleshed varieties such as monkfish, sea bass, and halibut and exclude fattier, oilier fish like salmon or tuna. Some fish should be large and firm fleshed; others should be small so that they disintegrate into the primary stock. Clams and mussels are certainly welcome, and sea snails (periwinkles), small squid, and octopus make fine additions, too.

Chinese or Southeast Asian markets are good sources for the smaller and stranger fish that are generally less costly and roughly correspond to the small reef dwellers labeled "soup fish" in French markets.

The fish should be skinned, which makes it easier to serve and eat; however, if you're feeling less formal—a mood that suits bouillabaisse—you may wish to serve it *à la provençale* and leave the fish on the bone.

ROUILLE IS A SPICY PROVENÇAL CONDIMENT FOR THE FISH

Made with red peppers scorched on the fire and peeled, a few small hot fresh chiles for piquancy, threads of saffron, and plenty of raw, fresh garlic, rouille (roo-EE) is the perfect complement to fish soup.

Authentic rouille has a pleasing porridge-like texture that can only be achieved with a mortar and pestle. It's possible to make the sauce in a blender, but the blender alters the flavor and

makes a smooth sauce, which is out of keeping with its rustic origins.

A MEAL IN A BOWL

Often I'll serve the bouillabaisse in the traditional way: the broth first, poured over slices of grilled bread, followed by platters of the fish and the rouille. But it's perfectly fine to serve the broth and fish together in a large shallow bowl, garnished with a crouton slathered with rouille.

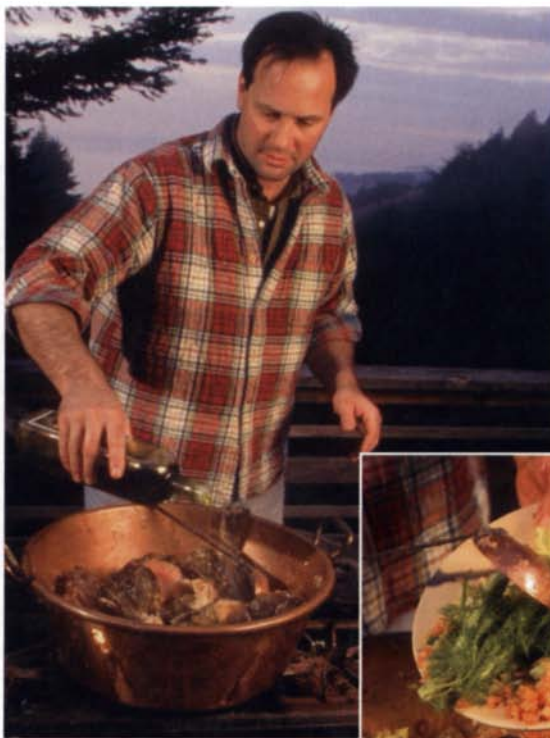
Thick with fish and aromatic vegetables and garnished with toasted bread, bouillabaisse is truly a meal in a bowl—it doesn't require much in the way of accompaniment. But I do like to begin with an appetizer like the artichoke torta featured here. A rich walnut frangipane tart is a sweet, simple ending to the meal.



Artichoke Torta

I like to use small, tender artichokes, about the size of a golfball. If these aren't available, use larger chokes, paring them down to their bottoms, removing the choke with the sharp edge of a spoon, and cutting them into pieces before cooking them. If you're in a hurry, use frozen artichoke hearts. *Yields one eight-inch torta; serves ten.*

- 12 small spring artichokes or 5 to 6 globe artichokes
- 2 Tbs. olive oil
- 2 shallots, minced
- Juice of ¼ lemon
- ½ cup water
- Salt
- 1 bunch (10 oz.) spinach, cleaned and stemmed
- 8 large eggs
- ½ cup half-and-half
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste
- ¾ cup grated creamy Havarti cheese (also called Dofino)
- ½ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 1 small bunch fresh basil, stemmed and coarsely chopped
- 2 oz. prosciutto, sliced thin and cut into small squares



Cook the bones with a splash of olive oil.

Sweat the chopped vegetables.

Add wine and water; simmer.

Make a rich fish stock, full of flavor and body

Good fish stock is the foundation for bouillabaisse, so it's worth the effort to get plenty of fresh fish bones, which not only provide flavor but texture, too: the gelatin in the bones add body and a smooth feel. If you have a good fishmonger, get your bones there. If you buy fish at the grocery store, you can probably order bones ahead and mix them with small, inexpensive whole fish.

Heat the oven to 375°F. Pare the artichokes down to the tender centers (or bottoms if using larger artichokes). Cut them in half.

In a medium nonstick frying pan, heat 1 Tbs. of the olive oil over medium heat. Add the shallots and cook about 1 min. Add the artichokes, lemon juice, water, and sprinkle with ½ tsp. salt. Cover and cook until the artichokes are tender in the center when pierced with the tip of a knife, 10 to 20 min. depending on their size (for frozen artichokes, thaw them and cook 5 min.). Uncover and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until all the liquid has evaporated. Let cool.

In a large pot of boiling salted water, cook the spinach for 2 min. Drain in a colander and refresh with cold water. With your hands, squeeze out as much water as possible. Transfer the spinach to a cutting board and chop it finely.

Crack the eggs into a large bowl, pour in the half-and-half, and whisk to combine. Season with about 1 tsp. salt and a few turns of the pepper mill. Add the cheeses, chopped spinach, basil, prosciutto, and the artichoke mixture and stir well.

Choose a baking dish or a small roasting pan large enough to hold an 8-inch nonstick frying pan. Add hot water to the dish to cover about one-quarter of the frying pan's depth. This will act as a water bath for cooking the torta.

Heat the remaining 1 Tbs. olive oil in the nonstick frying pan over medium-high heat until a drop of the egg mixture

sputters when added to the pan. Add the egg mixture and cook for 4 to 5 min. over medium-high heat. With a spatula, lift the torta away from the edges of the pan to gauge its progress; when you see that the torta has browned nicely all around, remove the pan from the heat and immediately put it in the water bath to stop the browning. Put the pan and water bath in the oven and bake until the torta is firm in the center, 40 to 45 min.

Remove the frying pan from the water bath and turn out the torta, bottom side up, on a cutting board. Let cool for 10 to 15 min. and cut into 1-inch chunks. Serve the torta pieces, top side up, at room temperature.

Fish Stock

Reserve ¼ cup of this stock for the rouille. The rest goes in the bouillabaisse. *Yields just over 4 quarts.*

6 lb. assorted very fresh fish carcasses or trimmings from fish such as lingcod, Pacific rockfish, sea bass, flounder, halibut (heads included) or small soup fish (gutted and gilled)

¼ cup olive oil

2 cups dry white wine, such as Sauvignon Blanc or Chablis

2 ribs celery, chopped

2 onions, chopped

4 carrots, peeled and chopped

5 large ripe tomatoes (or one 28-oz. can tomatoes, drained), peeled, seeded, and chopped

Feathery tops from 1 large bulb fennel (reserve the bulb for the bouillabaisse)

1 small bunch fresh flat-leaf parsley

1 small bunch fresh thyme

3 bay leaves

1 gallon water

Clean and rinse the fish carcasses or small fish. Warm the olive oil in a large pot (13 quarts is ideal) over medium heat. Add the fish carcasses and cook them, stirring continuously to expose all the surfaces to the heat, until the fish breaks down to a fragrant mess in the bottom of the pot, about 15 min. Add the wine and scrape up any bits of fish sticking to the bottom of the pot. Add the vegetables, herbs, and water and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and skim off and discard the white froth as it rises to the surface. Maintain a gentle simmer for 30 min.

Remove the stock from the heat and strain, pushing as much of the solids through as you can. Taste and simmer to reduce and concentrate the flavor a bit.



Bouillabaisse

Remember that you can use whatever combination of fish and shellfish you like, provided you don't include oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, or tuna. *Serves ten.*

4 lb. mixed filleted, skinned fish, such as Pacific rockfish, monkfish, sea bass, or halibut

Salt (use sea salt if possible)

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

2 large leeks, chopped

1 large bulb fennel, chopped

2 large potatoes, peeled and chopped

Pinch saffron (about 20 threads)

3 bay leaves

1 tsp. dried thyme

Freshly ground black pepper

8 large ripe tomatoes (or one 28-oz. can tomatoes), peeled, seeded, and chopped; juice strained and reserved

4 quarts fresh fish stock (see recipe at left)

1 lb. small clams, rinsed

1 lb. small mussels, scrubbed and rinsed

¾ lb. thin-fleshed squid, cleaned and cut into ringlets

2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

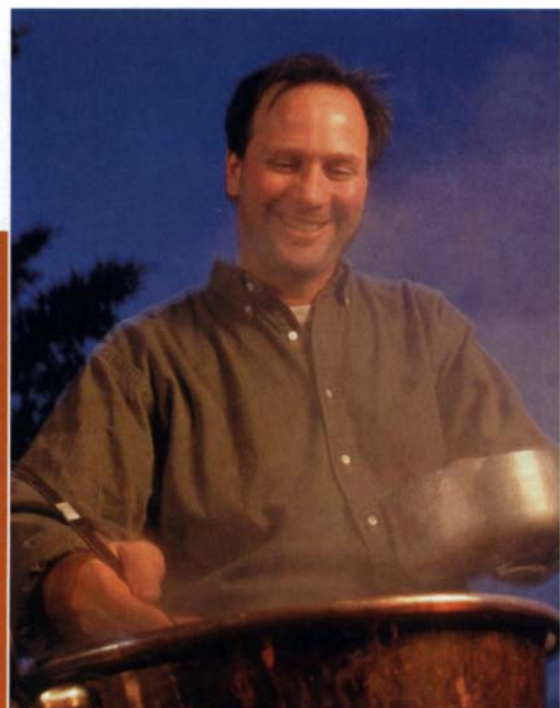
10 slices sourdough bread, toasted or grilled and rubbed with garlic

1 recipe rouille (see p. 46)

Locate the bones running vertically down the rockfish and other fish and make a cut on either side of the bones and take them out; use them for the stock, if you like. Cut all the fish fillets into 2- to 3-inch pieces, keeping the different varieties of fish separate. Sprinkle them with salt and toss them gently to distribute the salt; set aside.

Warm ¼ cup of the olive oil in a large soup pot; add the leeks, fennel, potatoes, saffron, bay leaves, thyme, 1 Tbs. salt, and a little freshly ground pepper. Stir the mixture well and cook slowly over medium-low heat until the leeks are completely soft but not browned and the potatoes are tender, about 30 min. Add the tomatoes, strained tomato juice, and fish stock. Taste and add more salt as needed. Bring to a rapid simmer.

Add the fish and the remaining ¼ cup olive oil to the simmering broth, raise the heat to high, and boil for about 10 min. Next add the clams and mussels and cook for another



Skim frequently for a fresh-tasting broth.

5 min. In the last minute, add the squid and parsley. Taste and add salt if needed. Remove the soup from the heat, cover, and let stand for 15 min.

Put a slice of the toasted garlic bread in the bottom of wide-rimmed serving bowls and ladle the soup on top. Serve with a spoonful of the rouille.



Rouille

Yields about 1 3/4 cups.

1/2 cup soft white breadcrumbs
1/4 cup fresh fish stock (see recipe p. 45)
2 large red bell peppers, roasted, peeled, seeded, and chopped (reserve any juice)
2 fresh serrano or other small hot chiles
2 to 3 cloves garlic
Pinch saffron (about 20 threads)
Freshly ground black pepper
1 tsp. red-wine vinegar
Salt
1/2 cup fruity extra-virgin olive oil

In a bowl, combine the breadcrumbs with the fish stock and any juices reserved from the roasted peppers; mix well. In a mortar, pound the chiles, garlic, and saffron to a paste. Add the red pepper, a bit at a time, and work to a similar consistency. Add the breadcrumbs; stir and grind the mixture

until it resembles a fine porridge. Grind a little black pepper into the sauce, add the vinegar, salt to taste, and stir in the olive oil.



Walnut Frangipane Tart

After the bouillabaisse has been cleared, serve this tart warm with a glass of Armagnac. Serves eight to ten.

FOR THE TART SHELL:
4 1/2 oz. (1 cup) all-purpose flour
3 oz. (6 Tbs.) cold unsalted butter, cut into small cubes
1/4 tsp. salt
1 1/2 tsp. sugar
1/4 cup water

FOR THE FRANGIPANE FILLING:
4 oz. (1 cup) chopped walnuts, toasted
4 oz. (8 Tbs.) unsalted butter at room temperature
1/2 cup sugar
2 tsp. Armagnac or brandy
2 large eggs
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
1 Tbs. melted butter

To make the tart shell—In a mixing bowl, combine the flour, butter, salt, and sugar. Mix well so that all the butter is coated. Add half the water. Using two knives, cut through the mixture to disperse the water and reduce the size of the butter cubes by half. Add the remaining water, pouring it over the dry portions of the dough and continue to cut until all the flour is damp.

Gather the dough together by hand; knead it very briefly to be certain the butter is well coated with flour and then compress the dough into a circular shape. Wrap the dough in plastic and refrigerate at least 1 hour before rolling.

Roll the dough into a 12-inch round. Transfer the dough to a baking sheet and refrigerate while you prepare the frangipane.

To make the frangipane—Heat the oven to 400°F. In a food processor, grind the walnuts to a coarse cornmeal texture. Put the butter in a mixing bowl and beat it until smooth and soft. Add the sugar and continue beating until well combined. Add the Armagnac and vanilla extract. Add the eggs one at a time, beating all the while. Stir in the ground nuts until well combined.

Spoon the frangipane onto the pastry round, leaving about a 2-inch border all around. Draw the border up and over the edge of the filling. Brush the melted butter over the edge of the dough. Bake until the frangipane is set and the pastry is well browned, about 50 min. Let cool slightly and serve warm.

Paul Bertolli is the chef and co-owner of Oliveto, a restaurant in Oakland, California. He's a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. ♦



Wine Choices

To partner bouillabaisse, pick reds or rosés from southern France

This full-flavored bouillabaisse gives you a perfect opportunity—especially now, in the dead of winter—to toss out the old “white wine with fish” dogma with a glass of young, not-too-tannic red. With this southern French recipe, look to the source for some excellent candidates. Domaine Tempier’s spicy Bandol is Paul Bertolli’s top choice; I’d also recommend

Auguste Clape’s Le Vin des Amis, or Domaine de la Gaultière’s Vin de Pays Rouge. A worthy Californian in the same style is Vin du Mistral Grenache by Joseph Phelps.

If you prefer something lighter, try a rosé, preferably made from some of the same types of grapes as the reds (Mourvèdre, Grenache, and Cinsault). You’ll find delicious rosés from Bandol; again,

Domaine Tempier makes a fine one. Or look for rosé from the Côtes de Provence (I like Château Maravanne), or from the Basque region (try Irouléguy from Domaine Arretxea).

Stuck on white with fish? Keep it clean, crisp, and dry: a Sauvignon Blanc by Napa’s Robert Pei or by Caliterra of Chile; or an Italian Pinot Grigio like Zenato from the Veneto. These whites,

and the rosés, too, all work nicely with the artichoke torta.

With the rich, nutty tart, try a snifter of Armagnac; look for L’Arressingle or Sempé. Or pour your favorite imported Cognac or a fine domestic brandy like Carneros Alambic.

Rosina Tinari Wilson teaches and writes about food and wine pairing in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Cooking Fennel to Bring Out Its Sweet Side

Roasted and tossed with pasta or braised until tender, fennel has a subtle and delightful flavor

BY MICOL NEGRIN



Look for fennel with its stalks and leaves still attached—it will taste fresher. The most common variety is Florentine fennel, also called finocchio. Available year-round, it's most tender in winter.

Fennel is one of those vegetables that can baffle the uninitiated. What does it taste like? What part do you eat? How do you cook it? These are all questions I've been asked as I pick up a bulb of fennel in the supermarket, not only by other shoppers, but by produce managers as well. Part of the problem is mistaken identity: fennel is often labeled as anise. Not only is this wrong—they're not the same plant—but it also makes people think that fennel has the same very strong licorice flavor as anise. Fennel is actually more delicate, its licorice-like undertones very subtle.

Italians, who seem to universally adore it, enjoy fennel in many ways: breaded and fried; sautéed with garlic; even raw with a drizzle of olive oil. I love the classic salad of thinly sliced raw fennel, fruity olive



Sweet-and-sour fennel makes a colorful side dish. Because you can serve it at room temperature, this dish works well at buffets.

oil, and shaved Parmesan. But more often I cook fennel to bring out its wonderful sweetness and tenderness. I'll roast it with garlic and tomatoes to toss with pasta, or I'll braise it with chicken stock until it's meltingly tender and then top it with Parmesan. Fennel is also delicious grilled or sautéed to keep some of its crunch.

BUY FIRM FENNEL, STALKS INTACT

Choose large, firm bulbs of fennel. If the bulb has its finger-like stalks and feathery leaves still attached, all the better. Uncut fennel has more flavor, and you can use the stalks and leaves as flavorings. I use the stalks in vegetable stocks or to make a "rack" for roasting fish. I use the leaves as I use fresh dill—to perfume sauces, sautés, or salads, or to snip them on a finished dish as a garnish.

Rounded bulbs tend to be sweeter than the more flattened, elongated ones, and their licorice flavor is a little less pronounced—a plus for some people and a minus for others. Pale fennel (more ivory than green) is often sweeter and less fibrous than dark. Check to see that there are no brown or soft spots and that the stalks aren't dried out or limp. Fennel keeps well in a plastic bag in the vegetable crisper for a few days.

Fennel needs a trim before cooking. Fennel can seem unwieldy to work with at first, especially if you buy it with the stalks intact. Once you cut off the stalks (slice them close to the bulb), you'll find you have a more manageable vegetable.

Though some cooks automatically remove the outermost layer of fennel, I find that needlessly wasteful, especially if I'm cooking the fennel rather than

using it raw. After rinsing the bulb under cold water, I simply peel the stringy fibers off the outer layer with a potato peeler or a sharp paring knife. If you do need to remove the outer layer because it's particularly fibrous or discolored, make a shallow horizontal slit along the base of the bulb and peel the layer away.

When braising, grilling, or roasting fennel, I usually cut the bulb in half and then into four to eight wedges. I leave the core intact so that the layers of each piece remain attached. When I want to make thin slices to toss with pasta or to use raw in a salad, I core the wedges and cut them into half-moon slices (see photo below). You can also chop fennel, much as you would an onion, when using it as part of an aromatic vegetable base for stuffings, stews, and soups.

**Rounded bulbs
are sweeter and
less licorice-like
than flattened ones.**

Sweet & Sour Braised Fennel

This side dish pairs especially well with roasted or grilled fish. *Serves four.*

2 medium bulbs fennel, washed and trimmed
2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
2 carrots, peeled and cut into thick slices on the diagonal
1 large red onion, quartered
1 clove garlic, minced
Juice of 1 lemon
1 cup water; more as needed
1 tsp. sugar
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Cut the fennel bulbs in half through their cores and cut each half into four or five wedges. In a large, heavy-based pan, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the fennel (in batches, if necessary) and brown it well on one side, about 5 min. Turn the wedges with tongs and brown the other side. Add the carrots, onion, and garlic; cook over medium heat, stirring, until soft, about 8 min. Stir in the lemon juice, water, sugar, salt, and pepper, scraping up any browned bits. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally,



Peel fennel to remove fibers and cut it into wedges or slices



Peel the outer layer to remove any tough strings. If it's bruised or seems very tough, remove it altogether.



Remove the core for slices but leave it in for wedges—the core will keep the individual layers together.



Cut thin slices for salads and sautés. You can also chop fennel like an onion for a mirepoix or a soup base.



Fennel roasted with garlic and tomatoes makes a great topping for pasta. Roasting the vegetables is a great "hands-off" way to make a flavorful dish.

until the fennel is soft and the liquid has reduced to a glaze, about 25 min. Check about halfway through cooking; if there's still a lot of liquid, remove the cover and continue to cook. If the liquid evaporates before the fennel is cooked through, add a little water, cover, and continue to cook. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Spaghettini with Roasted Fennel & Mozzarella

Fennel seeds and fresh basil echo the subtle licorice flavor of the fresh fennel. *Serves two.*

*2 medium bulbs fennel, washed and trimmed
1 head garlic, cloves peeled and, if large, halved
1 Tbs. fennel seeds, chopped
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
4 canned plum tomatoes, chopped (2½ cup)
¼ tsp. dried chile flakes
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
½ lb. spaghettini
1 cup loosely packed basil leaves
3 oz. fresh mozzarella, cut into cubes (about ½ cup)
⅓ cup freshly grated Parmesan*



Tender baked fennel will melt in your mouth. It's wonderful drizzled with olive oil and topped with Parmesan cheese.

Heat the oven to 450°F. Cut the fennel bulbs into quarters through their cores. With a chef's knife, cut out each core, set the wedges cut side down, and cut them into ⅛-inch slices. In a shallow ovenproof dish or baking pan, toss the fennel with the garlic, fennel seeds, half of the olive oil, the tomatoes, chile flakes, salt, and pepper. Spread the mixture evenly in the bottom of the pan. Roast without stirring until the fennel is limp and somewhat browned, 35 to 45 min.

When the fennel is just cooked, cook the spaghettini until *al dente*, drain it, and return it to its pot. Add the roasted mixture to the pot and toss. Add the remaining olive oil. Tear the basil into pieces and add it to the pot. Just before serving, toss with the mozzarella and Parmesan. Serve immediately, with extra Parmesan on the table.

Fennel & Parmesan Gratin

Wedges of fennel, baked until meltingly tender, are topped with cheese for a truly delicious dish that's great with roasted chicken. *Serves four.*

*2 medium bulbs fennel, washed and trimmed
½ cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock
2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
⅓ cup freshly grated Parmesan, preferably Parmigiano-Reggiano*

Heat the oven to 400°F. Cut each fennel bulb in half through its core; cut the halves into 2 or 3 wedges each. Snuggle the wedges, cut side up, in a baking dish (9x9 inches or the equivalent works well). Pour the stock into the dish. Drizzle the oil over the wedges and season them with salt and pepper. Cover the pan with foil and bake for 30 min. Uncover and sprinkle the wedges with the Parmesan. Continue baking uncovered until the fennel is tender and the cheese is browned, another 30 to 45 min.

A native of Italy, Micol Negrin is a chef and food writer who lives in New York City. ♦

Baking a Layer Cake for Pure Chocolate Bliss

Use yogurt for a tender crumb, cocoa for fudgy flavor, and mocha frosting for a sophisticated twist

BY ALICE MEDRICH

Old-fashioned chocolate layer cakes—tall, toothsome tantalizers—are truly American. A piece of chocolate cake and a glass of milk is the ultimate treat. And it's a darn good antidote to the winter blues, come to think of it.

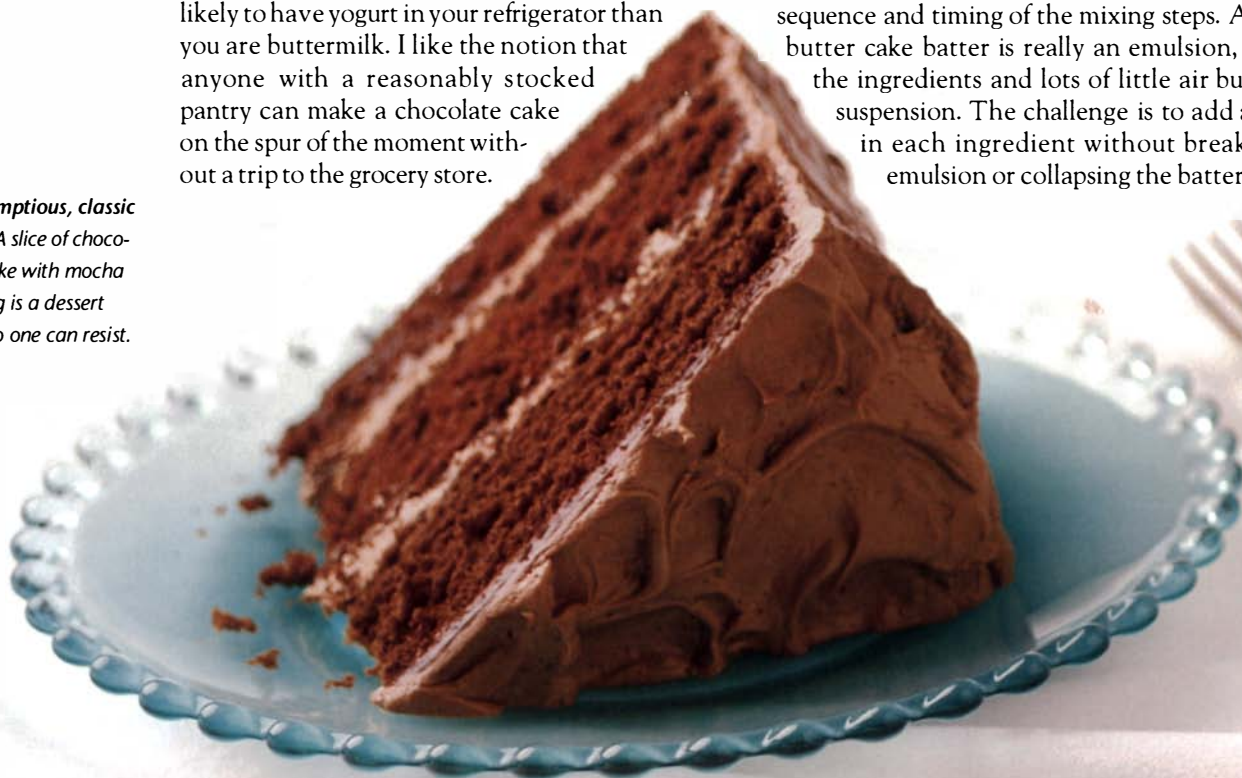
Even with this classic, there's variation in how to get delicious results. Cakes can get their chocolatey flavor from unsweetened cocoa powder or unsweetened baking chocolate. Some are made with water, some with milk, and some with sour cream or buttermilk. My version uses unsweetened cocoa because I like the combination of intense chocolate flavor and light, melt-in-the-mouth texture that only cocoa can provide. I also use yogurt instead of buttermilk, since it makes a delicious old-fashioned tasting chocolate layer cake, and you're probably more likely to have yogurt in your refrigerator than you are buttermilk. I like the notion that anyone with a reasonably stocked pantry can make a chocolate cake on the spur of the moment without a trip to the grocery store.

My chocolate layer cake is made like a classic butter cake, where fat and sugar are creamed together until fluffy and then eggs are added, followed by the dry ingredients with the leavening, alternating with the wet ingredients. The cake rises in the oven because of the carbon dioxide produced by the leaven—in this case, baking soda—as it reacts with the other ingredients in the cake. But some of the rise and much of the sought-after velvety texture are also a function of how the ingredients are prepared and how the batter is mixed.

PERFECT CAKE NEEDS CAREFUL MIXING

A perfectly blended cake batter depends on the temperature of the ingredients and on the uninterrupted sequence and timing of the mixing steps. A perfect butter cake batter is really an emulsion, with all the ingredients and lots of little air bubbles in suspension. The challenge is to add and mix in each ingredient without breaking the emulsion or collapsing the batter.

A scrumptious, classic treat. A slice of chocolate cake with mocha frosting is a dessert that no one can resist.





When I'm getting set up to bake, I always allow time to let all the ingredients come to room temperature, to measure everything, to grease and line the baking pans, and to give the oven time to heat to the right temperature. That way, I can make the cake without stopping between steps.

Bring all ingredients to room temperature.

If you've ever made mayonnaise or any other type of emulsion, you know that adding a cold ingredient can cause the emulsion to break and the mixture to separate.

It's the same with classic cake making; all the ingredients should be 65° to 70°F.

Make sure the butter is pliable but firm, not soft and squishy. Firm but pliable butter beaten with sugar traps air and increases volume.

If the butter is too soft, it will fail to trap air as it's creamed with the sugar. You can bring refrigerated or frozen butter to room temperature quickly in a microwave: use the low or defrost setting for a few seconds at a time, being very careful not to melt the butter or make it too squishy.

Whisk the eggs together briefly with a fork. Whisking will blend the yolks and whites so that you'll be able to dribble the egg into the batter in a slow stream as you beat. Adding unbeaten eggs one at a time to a cake batter sometimes causes the batter to collapse because you have to beat the batter too much in order to mix in the eggs thoroughly.

Sift the flour for consistent results and a tender cake. Sifting before measuring ensures that each cup of cake flour will weigh consistently about 3½ ounces

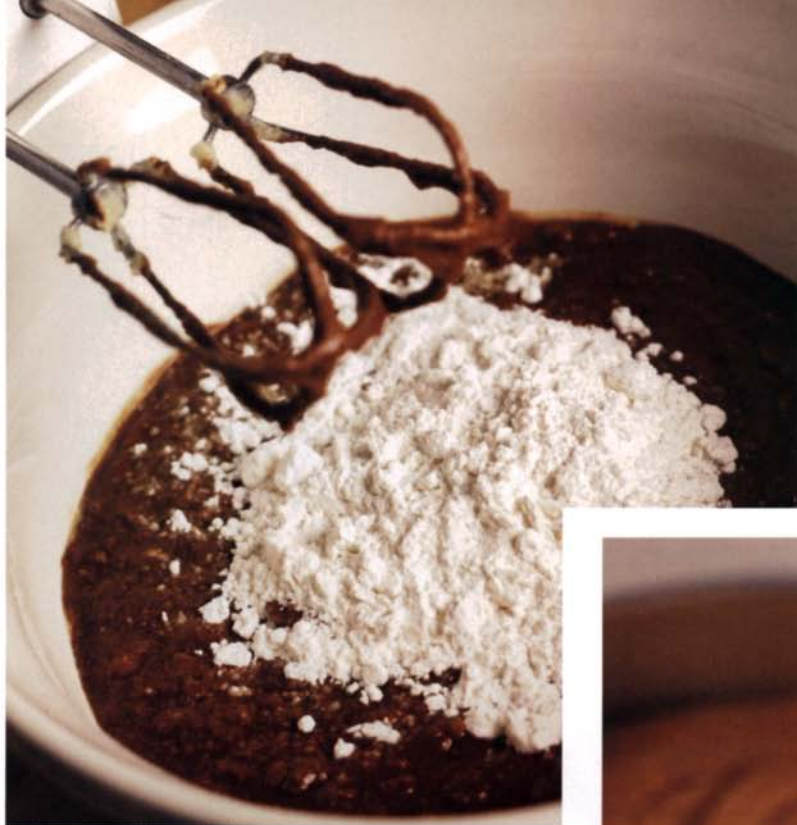


Stop the mixer before each addition. This helps avoid over-mixing and ensures the dry ingredients won't scatter and fly.

(all-purpose flour is slightly heavier), assuming that the sifted flour is spooned gently into the cup until heaping and then leveled off without packing or tapping. Sifting flour two or three times after you measure serves another function: it aerates, fluffs up, and separates the grains so that the flour is easily mixed into a cake batter without clumping, thereby avoiding the excessive mixing that toughens a cake.

Use a kitchen scale, or measuring cups designed for dry ingredients (where capacity is measured at the very rim of the cup). Glass measuring cups with markings all the way up the sides are designed for liquid ingredients and will not give you an accurate flour measurement.

Divide dry ingredients into thirds and add them alternately with half of the wet ingredients. Adding dry and wet ingredients to the batter in small, alternating batches avoids collapsing the batter by adding too much of any one ingredient at a time. Use low speed to mix in the dry ingredients; low to medium speed to mix in liquids. Scrape the sides of the bowl as necessary to be sure the ingredients are blended smoothly. Mix in each ingredient only until it's fully incorporated, no longer. I stop the mixer before I add the next ingredient to the bowl to avoid overmixing. Once the flour comes into contact with liquid in the batter, the gluten in the flour begins to develop during mixing; too much mixing produces a tough cake.



During mixing, add dry ingredients in small amounts. Alternating dry and wet keeps the batter smooth and airy for tender cake with the best texture.

If you like to prepare ahead of time, know that baked, cooled cake layers will stay fresh for one or two days before you frost them; just be sure to wrap them well and keep them at room temperature. Cake layers will keep in the freezer for up to three months.

Chocolate Layer Cake with Mocha Milk Chocolate Frosting

For best results in texture and flavor, this recipe needs natural (nonalkalized) cocoa, such as Hershey's, Nestlé, or Ghiradelli, rather than Dutch-processed (alkalized) cocoa. Amounts for flour, cocoa, and butter are listed by weight (ounces) and by volume (cups or tablespoons); use either measurement. *Yields three 9-inch cake layers and about 4 cups of frosting.*

FOR THE CAKE:

10½ oz. (3 cups) sifted cake flour
1½ tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. salt
1 cup boiling water
2½ oz. (¾ cup plus 2 Tbs.) unsifted unsweetened natural (nonalkalized) cocoa
¾ cup cold water
½ cup cold plain yogurt (regular or low-fat)
1 Tbs. vanilla extract
6 oz. (12 Tbs.) unsalted butter, softened at room temperature
2⅔ cups sugar
3 large eggs, at room temperature

FOR THE FROSTING:

24 oz. milk chocolate, chopped into matchstick-size pieces
3 oz. (6 Tbs.) unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
4½ tsp. instant espresso powder
Scant ⅛ tsp. salt
1 cup plus 2 Tbs. heavy cream
1½ tsp. vanilla extract

Photos above, center, and bottom right: Scott Phillips



Bake the cake—Position a rack in the lower third of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Line the bottoms of three 9-inch cake pans with kitchen parchment (see Basics, p. 76) and lightly grease the sides. Combine the flour, baking soda, and salt. Sift together three times and set aside. In a mixing bowl, pour the boiling water over the cocoa and stir to blend. Refrigerate to cool to lukewarm, stirring occasionally to speed cooling. Stir in the cold water, yogurt, and vanilla. If necessary, refrigerate again to cool to room temperature before continuing.

In the bowl of an electric mixer, beat the butter and sugar until light in color and texture, 6 to 7 min. at high speed with a hand-held mixer. If you're using a heavy-duty mixer, use the paddle attachment at medium speed (the whisk attachment will aerate the batter too much). The butter and sugar mixture will remain somewhat granular; this is fine. Whisk the eggs briefly and dribble them slowly into the butter mixture, 2 to 3 min., stopping as needed to scrape down the bowl and beaters.

Stop the mixer and spoon one-third of the flour mixture into the mixing bowl. Beat on low speed, scraping the bowl at least once, just until all traces of flour are incorporated. Stop the mixer and pour in half of the cocoa mixture. Beat on low to medium speed, scraping the bowl at least once, just until the mixture is blended. Stop mixing and spoon half of the remaining flour into the bowl. Beat as before. Stop mixing to add the remaining cocoa mixture and beat as before.



Parchment-lined cake pans with greased sides mean the layers will come out easily and intact after they're baked.



These cake layers are perfectly baked. The cake should shrink from the pan sides, and a toothpick should come out clean when inserted in the center.



Alice's cake frosting tips

- ◆ Cool the cake layers completely before frosting them so the frosting doesn't melt and make the cake slip and slide.
- ◆ Brush stray crumbs from all cake layers.
- ◆ Set the first layer, flat side down, on a serving plate or a piece of cardboard; cover the top evenly with $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of the frosting.
- ◆ Set the second cake layer on top, flat side up; cover the top evenly with another $\frac{2}{3}$ cup frosting.
- ◆ Set the third layer on top, flat side down.
- ◆ If the frosting is very soft and the cake layers start to slide, refrigerate the cake for about 20 minutes.
- ◆ Before frosting the sides, slide four wide strips of waxed paper under the sides to keep the serving platter clean.
- ◆ Spread a very thin layer of frosting all over the top and sides of the cake just to cover and smooth the cracks and secure loose cake crumbs. As you work, be sure to keep cake crumbs from getting into the frosting bowl.
- ◆ To spread the rest of the frosting lavishly over the cake, smooth it with a spatula and then create texture with a cake comb, a serrated knife, or the back of a spoon.
- ◆ If you like, dust lightly with confectioners' sugar or Dutched cocoa, or sprinkle with chocolate shavings.

Add the last of the flour mixture and beat it in. Divide the batter evenly among the prepared cake pans, spreading the batter to level it.

Bake, rotating the pans halfway through, until the cake just begins to shrink from the sides of the pan and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, 30 to 35 min. Cool the cakes on a rack for about 5 min. Invert the pans to unmold. Peel off the parchment liners and turn the layers right side up to cool on the rack. Cool completely before filling and frosting.

Make the frosting—Put the chocolate, butter, espresso powder, and salt in a large bowl. Bring the cream to a boil and pour it over the chocolate mixture. Stir until the chocolate is completely melted and smooth. Stir in the vanilla. Refrigerate until the mixture is cold and feels quite firm when you touch it, at least 2 hours. When you're ready to frost the cake, beat the frosting with a hand-held electric mixer (it will seem a bit firm to beat at first), until the frosting lightens in color, has a spreadable but not-too-stiff consistency, and holds a nice shape. Frost the cake immediately (see the sidebar above), using about $\frac{2}{3}$ cup between each layer and the rest for the top and sides.

Chocolate guru Alice Medrich is the author of *Cocolat: Extraordinary Chocolate Desserts and Chocolate & The Art of Low-Fat Desserts* (Warner, 1990 and 1994). She lives in Berkeley, California. ◆

Discover the Pleasures of a Cheese Course

Extend the dinner hour, relax with friends, and explore a range of excellent cheeses, from creamy Brie to piquant Roquefort

BY RICHARD & JANET TARLOV

Imagine you've invited a few friends in for dinner, and you're all gathered around the table. You've just finished your main course, and everyone is relaxed, sipping on the last of the wine. "If only this wonderful time could last longer," you think. At our house, we've found the perfect way to do this—by serving a cheese course after dinner. As we savor the

cheese, our guests sit back and conversation flows. Many times, we've been startled from this dreamy state, only to find that an hour or two has slipped away.

"But what exactly is a cheese course?" In our work for the Oakville Grocery in California, we find that many people ask this question. A cheese course can be as simple as one great cheese for guests to nibble on at their leisure after dinner, or it can be a carefully considered platter of selected cheeses, showcasing a variety of textures and flavors—for instance, a semisoft cheese like Camembert, a hard cheese like aged Dry Monterey Jack, and a blue cheese like Gorgonzola.

In Europe, cheese is a natural follow-up to meals. The cheese is usually served at the dinner table with some good bread, and if no dessert is planned after the cheese course, ripe or dried fruits, nuts, or other accompaniments might be offered with the cheese. Sometimes cheese is served as a partner to a leafy salad.

You've probably noticed that many American restaurants have



American artisanal cheeses have gotten so good, you can easily make an "all-American" cheese course. Clockwise from right: Cypress Grove Humboldt Fog, Grafton Village Vermont Cheddar, Iowa's Maytag Blue, Peluso's Teleme, and Vella's aged Dry Monterey Jack (both from California).





Janet and Richard Tarlov offer tastes to curious customers buying cheese at the Oakville Grocery in Napa Valley.

picked up on this European custom, largely because American chefs are anxious to show off the excellent variety of artisanal cheeses now being made here. There's no reason you can't do the same thing.

Planning a cheese course is easy, and it's a great excuse for taste-testing. Nothing could be simpler or more satisfying than serving a cheese course—there are no formal rules. We offer some guidelines here for buying and presenting cheese, but the best piece of advice we can offer is to try as many different cheeses as you can to learn about the incredibly delicious varieties being made today. Once you figure out what you like and what you'd like to share with your friends, you can narrow your choices to three or four for a particular cheese course. (Any more than five at a time is a little overwhelming to

the palate.) To help you get a good idea of the various flavors and textures, see the chart at right—it's based on the hundreds of cheeses we're lucky enough to taste every year.

Serve cheese at room temperature. Once you've decided what you'll serve for your cheese course, the only real rule you should remember is to bring cheese to room temperature before serving it. Cheese that's just been removed from the refrigerator has only a fraction of the flavor of cheese that has been tempered. For a cheese course, this is convenient, because you can take the cheese out of the refrigerator, arrange it as you'd like to serve it, and loosely cover it, all before dinner. Let the cheese breathe by removing all wrappings and by covering the tray loosely with cheesecloth, a dishtowel, or a glass cheese bell.

Showcase a variety of textures and flavors in your cheese course.

Choose open, accessible cheese platters. When deciding what type of serving platter to use for a cheese course, consider how many guests you have. If your numbers (and table) are small, one good platter should be fine as long as it isn't too heavy to pass. Cake plates and wooden boards work well, too. Line the tray with fresh fig, grape, or lemon leaves, or a straw mat, if you wish. If you have a lot of guests, make up two cheese platters, or put each cheese on a different plate. Just be sure to leave room around each cheese so it can be cut comfortably. Provide each guest with a salad or bread plate to put the cheese on as it comes around.

You don't need special knives for a cheese course. While cheese knives with a variety of blades and decorative handles are available, you probably have what you need in your kitchen drawers. You'll want to provide a small knife for each cheese with a different texture—a sharp knife for semihard or hard cheeses and a spreading or butter-type knife for each softer, messier cheese. Start a few cuts or slices in each piece by following the natural lines of the cheese or by cutting a small wedge out of a wheel of cheese. If you're not sure how to cut a certain shape, or if you want suggestions on which rinds to eat and which to trim, ask your cheese merchant.

Skip crackers and serve cheese with a good loaf of bread. Although many of us grew up on "cheese and crackers," the proliferation of excellent fresh-baked



For the fullest flavor and best texture, unwrap your cheeses and let them come to room temperature before serving. Clockwise from left: Le Chevrot (a goat cheese from the Loire Valley), herby Brin d'Amour (a sheep's milk cheese from Corsica), Stilton (the classic English blue), and Reblochon (a French washed-rind cow's milk cheese) make a nice combination.

Select three to five cheeses from different categories

Use the chart below to help you pick a selection of cheeses that will work well for a cheese plate. We've arranged several of our favorite cheeses first

by texture and the method by which they're made, and then by cross-referencing them according to the type of animal's milk from which

they're made—a big flavor factor.

For an ideal cheese course, narrow your focus to three to five cheeses, each from a

different category in the chart, for a good variety of flavors and textures. You'll want to taste as many cheeses as you can to discover what you like.

TEXTURE <i>amount of aging</i>	CHEESEMAKING METHOD	FLAVORS	COW'S MILK CHEESE	SHEEP'S MILK CHEESE	GOAT'S MILK CHEESE
Soft (spreadable) 10 days to 6 weeks	drained and lightly pressed	tangy (often made with fresh herbs)	fresh mozzarella	ricotta salata	Laura Chenel's Chabis
	soft-ripened	yeasty, aromatic	Brie, Camembert	Berger de Rocastin (France)	Coach Farm Rounds
	washed rind	sweet, aromatic	Alsatian Munster	Perail	Tommette Puy de Fou (France)
Semihard (sliceable, elastic) 4 to 12 weeks	washed rind	nutty, rich	Port Salut	—	Bethmale (French Pyrenees)
	natural rind	earthy	Gruyère	Vermont Shepherd's Cheese	Garrotxa (Spain)
	waxed rind	creamy, mild	young Gouda (red wax)	P'tit Basque	Goat Gouda
	brine cured	salty, piquant	Danish Feta	Greek, French, or Bulgarian Feta	Redwood Hill Goat Feta
Hard (dry, crumbly, or grateable) 3 months to 3 years	cloth-bound rind	sharp, earthy	English Farmhouse Cheddar	Sally Jackson's Sheep Cheese in Chestnut Leaves	Banon (France)
	waxed rind	lean, sharp	Vermont Cheddar	Bellweather Farms Toscana	Majorero (Spain)
	natural rind	nutty, earthy	Parmigiano- Reggiano	Manchego	aged Crottin
Blue (creamy to crumbly) 12 weeks to 1 year	inoculated with penicillium spores	piquant or sharp	Gorgonzola	Roquefort	Dietrich Blue
		creamy and rich	Stilton	Beenleigh Blue (England)	Jacquin Bluet (France)



A few key cheesemaking terms

Curd—The solid element of milk after separation from the liquid whey. The curd for soft cheeses is handled very gently to retain moisture; for hard cheeses, the curd is cut, kneaded, or milled.

Soft-ripened—Cheese that is seeded or sprayed with *penicillium candidum*, which encourages the growth of a bloomy,

white rind and ripens the cheese from the outside in.

Natural rind—After the cheese is pressed, the rind is allowed to form naturally as a protective coating. The cheesemaker may periodically rub or brush the cheese to prevent mold growth.

Washed rind—Cheese that is washed during its maturation

with brine, liquor, or spirits, or a mixture of wine and water, which encourages the growth of a distinctive moist and aromatic rind, often orange in color.

Cloth-bound or leaf-wrapped—During maturation, the cheese is wrapped in cloth or leaves, which gives the cheese unique earthy flavors.

Waxed rind—After the cheese is pressed, the cheesemaker dips the cheese in wax, which protects it from mold during maturation.

Brine-cured—Lightly pressed blocks of curd are soaked and matured in a salt-water brine.

Finding and buying good cheese



Finding good cheese today is much easier than it was even ten years ago, thanks to the fantastic growth of American artisanal cheeses and better importing of European cheeses. Here are some guidelines to help you shop for cheese.

◆ **LOOK FOR A REPUTABLE MERCHANT.** You can recognize serious cheeseshellers by their willingness to talk about cheese, to offer you tastes, and to cut cheese to order from whole

wheels. They usually won't sell cheese that's been cut and packaged before arriving at their store, and their cheeses will carry signs describing their flavors, textures, and origins.

◆ **TAKE ADVANTAGE** of the cheesesheller's knowledge. If you find a knowledgeable cheesesheller, be sure to take advantage of this resource. Ask the staff a lot of questions. Develop a rela-

tionship with the seller in the same way you would a wine merchant, giving feedback about your likes and dislikes, and explaining how you'll be using the cheese you buy.

◆ **FIND THE BEST CHEESE COUNTER** among your local grocery stores. If you have access to a store devoted exclusively to cheese, consider yourself lucky and head there immediately. Next, find out if a local specialty gourmet store has a cheese counter. Barring that, you'll want to compare the cheese selections at your local grocery stores. Many markets carry at least a few varieties of fine cheese. Some grocery stores now have service counters where trained staff will cut and wrap cheese to order. At the very least, look for cheese that the store has obviously wrapped on the premises, and avoid cheese that's vacuum-sealed in plastic.

◆ **ALWAYS INSPECT THE CHEESE** before buying it. If it smells at all like ammonia, or if the rind is either dried and cracked or very wet, it's probably not in the best condition.

◆ **IF THE MERCHANT OFFERS TASTES**, always accept, even if you've tried the cheese before.

Cheese is an ever-changing product that varies with season, maturity, and handling. Tasting the cheese is the only guarantee that you will like it.



◆ **REFRIGERATE CHEESE** when you get it home. Cheese continues to ripen as it ages, and refrigeration slows this process. The very freshest cheeses (like ricotta) have the shortest shelf life—just a few days. The hardest aged cheeses (like Parmigiano-Reggiano) keep for months if properly stored.

◆ **IF YOU CAN'T FIND THE CHEESE** you want in your area, try ordering by mail. The sources we've listed below include several excellent gourmet stores that specialize in hard-to-find imported and domestic cheeses and will be glad to ship cheese to you. Also, an extensive list of artisan cheesemakers who will mail their products directly is available on *Fine Cooking's* web site (www.taunton.com). And there are sites on the Internet that sell high-quality cheese directly.

Sources for ordering top-quality cheese through the mail

The Cheese Store, 419 N. Beverly Dr., Beverly Hills, CA 90210; 800/547-1515. This popular gourmet store's focus is on cheese, and it carries anywhere from 200 to 400 varieties at any given time.

Formaggio Kitchen, 244 Huron Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138; 617/354-4750. This Boston gourmet market has an outstanding selection of over 200 cheeses, as well as its own ripening room, where cheeses are held or aged at the best temperature and humidity.

House of Wisconsin Cheese, 107 State St., Madison, WI 53703; 800/955-0238. This store has nearly 50 varieties of Wisconsin cheese—Cheddar, Edam, Swiss, Colby, and Brick, to name a few.

Ideal Cheese Shop, 1205 Second Ave., New York, NY 10021; 800/382-0109. Devoted entirely to cheese, with a specialty in hard-to-find imported European cheeses, this store can find just about any cheese you're looking for.

Murray's, 257 Bleecker St., New York, NY 10014; 212/243-3289. This tiny store is a not-very-well-kept secret of New York City cheese lovers. It carries a huge variety (over 300 cheeses at any particular time of the year) of the highest quality cheeses at very fair prices.

Oakville Grocery, Oakville, California, and other locations; 800/455-2305; www.oakvillegrocery.com. This Wine Country gourmet store made its reputation on a fine selec-

tion of cheeses and wines. With four locations, a mail-order catalog, and a web site, its exceptional selection of cheese is available to all.

Zingerman's Delicatessen, 422 Detroit St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104; 313/663-3354. Visit this amazing store for a selection of all the "bests" in the gourmet world, including an outstanding cheese department. Or call for the catalog, which features detailed descriptions of carefully chosen American and European cheeses.

On the Internet
www.igourmet.com—Descriptions and prices of hard-to-find imported cheeses are available directly from the site and through a cheese-of-the-month club.

www.wgx.com/cheesenet—Information on how cheese is made and links to cheese producers and other cheese web sites.

www.taunton.com—Click on *Fine Cooking's* web site for information on more than 40 American artisan cheesemakers, including Egg Farm Dairy, Grafton Village Cheese Company, Maytag Dairy Farms, Sally Jackson Cheese Company, Vella Cheese Company, and more.

www.cheesesociety.org—American Cheese Society, (W7702 County Road X, Darien, WI 53114, 414/728-4458) This organization encourages the appreciation of America's farmstead and natural specialty cheeses.

breads in many parts of the country allows many more options for cheese lovers. We're fond of dense breads studded with nuts and dried fruit to pair with cheese. Any sort of fresh bread, though, is preferable, in our minds, to crackers. The yeasty overtones of bread blend nicely with the many complex flavors of cheese.

Round out cheese platters with your own creative ideas. The incorrigible food stylists among us can have a ball arranging cheese platters, since cheese is a gorgeous, tempting, delectable food, but remember, too, that cheese doesn't have to be embellished. While olives, cornichons, chutneys, dried and fresh fruits, and toasted nuts complement most cheeses, they aren't necessary. Consider how substantial the rest of your meal will be before designing your cheese platter. If you've had a fairly light main course, you can round out your cheese selection with accompaniments.

What you serve with a cheese should highlight its best qualities. Often the best way to do this is with flavor and texture contrasts. For instance, the salty-sweet contrast of a good blue cheese with fresh figs is magical. Slices of crisp, tart apple give a textural kick to creamy Brie. Also consider the season when choosing accompaniments. For instance, in fall and winter, California aged Dry Jack is a special treat with fresh pears and toasted walnuts. And the region a cheese is from—and sometimes its history—will offer good clues for natural pairings: a Spanish cheese like Manchego is terrific with Spanish olives or almonds and sherry. The well-travelled British discovered that their own farmhouse Cheddar was a great match with Indian chutney, and the pairing of port and Stilton is legendary. (For more on pairing wine and cheese, turn to *Enjoying Wine* on p. 22).

Sometimes the best way to highlight a cheese is to serve it with a salad. We often like to introduce our friends to one very special cheese by serving a little bit of it with a simple green salad. For instance, we recently served a salad of fresh baby greens with a hazelnut dressing and a few slices of nutty Comté.

As an alternative to the cheese platter, you can plate individual servings of cheese. If you'd like to make your cheese course a bit more formal, you can cut servings of cheese in the kitchen and design a small plate for each guest. For instance, we like to cut a small wedge of piquant mountain Gorgonzola



A drizzle of honey complements mountain Gorgonzola and walnuts. Pass a good crusty baguette around the table after bringing each of your guests an individual serving.

for each guest, drizzle the cheese with a little honey, and toss a few toasted walnuts over it, as shown above. We pass a crusty baguette around the table with this. Sometimes, though, the best cheese course is the simplest. After dinner, bring out a hefty chunk of one great cheese, like a Stilton, and let your guests work on it as they please.

Whether plain or extravagant, the cheese course is designed for savoring. Each bite is an explosion of flavors, each sip of wine so satisfying. The enjoyment of cheese is the perfect antidote to the frenetic pace of our workaday lives, allowing time for family and friends to relax and enjoy one another and the savory pleasures of one of the world's great foods.

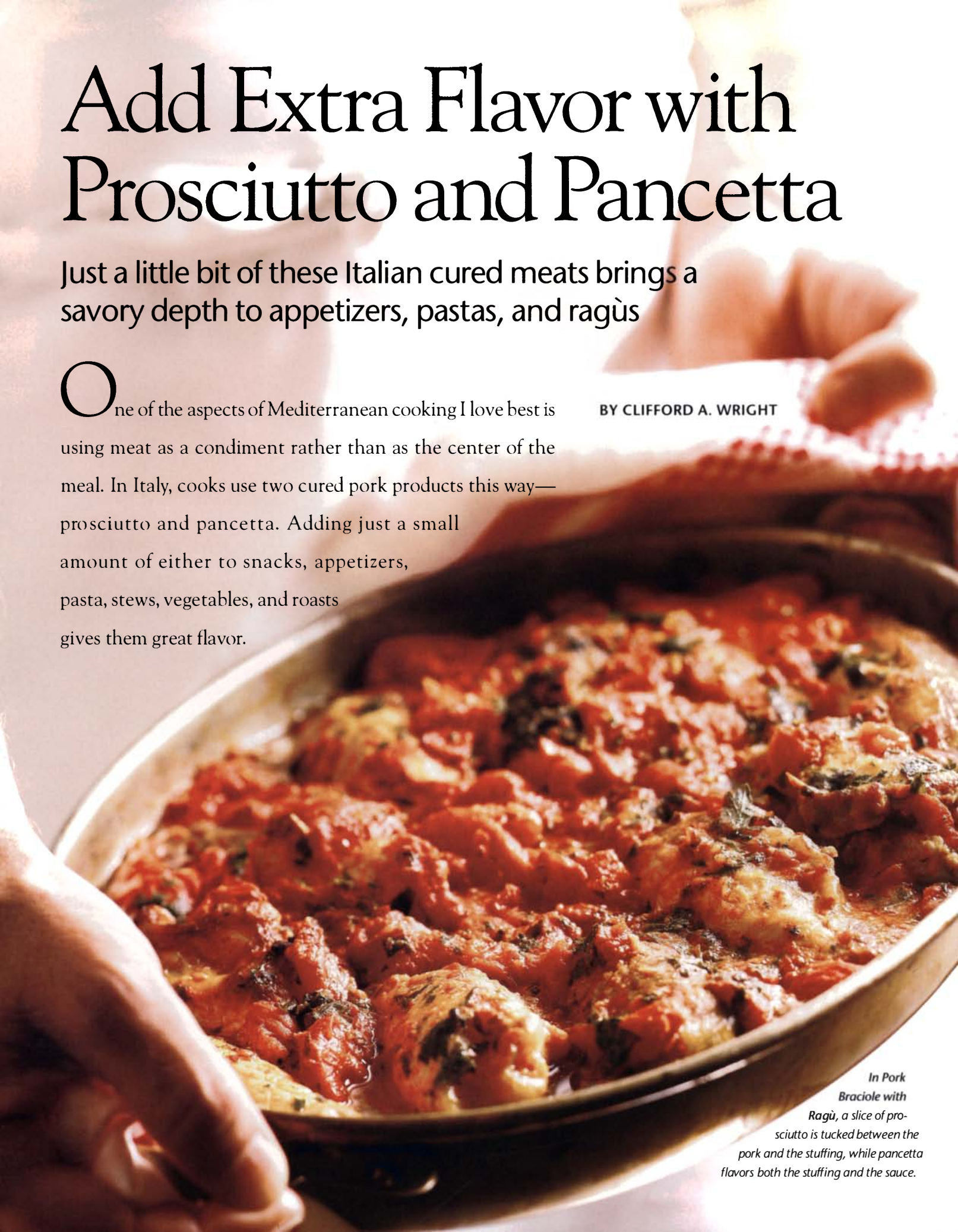
Richard Tarlov is a manager of the Oakville Grocery; Janet Tarlov is the company's charcuterie and cheese buyer. ♦

Add Extra Flavor with Prosciutto and Pancetta

Just a little bit of these Italian cured meats brings a savory depth to appetizers, pastas, and ragùs

One of the aspects of Mediterranean cooking I love best is using meat as a condiment rather than as the center of the meal. In Italy, cooks use two cured pork products this way—prosciutto and pancetta. Adding just a small amount of either to snacks, appetizers, pasta, stews, vegetables, and roasts gives them great flavor.

BY CLIFFORD A. WRIGHT



In Pork Braciole with Ragù, a slice of prosciutto is tucked between the pork and the stuffing, while pancetta flavors both the stuffing and the sauce.

PROSCIUTTO IS BEST ENJOYED SIMPLY

A hindquarter cut of pork that's cured, dried, and aged to a maroon-pink color, good prosciutto (pronounced proh-SHOO-toh) is ever-so-slightly sweet, just the right degree of salty, and almost melts in your mouth. It's best eaten plain or wrapped around fruits or vegetables (see sidebar below), but you can also use it as a flavorful addition to a stuffing or tossed into pasta at the last minute.

For cooking, use a lesser grade than Parma. (The very best grade is prosciutto di Parma, which you should never cook.) Prosciutto di San Danieli (from the Friuli region) is very good, and Citterio makes a good domestic brand. Apply gentle, indirect heat when you cook prosciutto, or it will get tough and leathery. Ask your grocer for the end pieces, bones, and bits of fat that get discarded; they're great for flavoring soups and stews.

When shopping, ask for a taste. Make sure it's sliced as thin as possible: the meat should be translucent. If you see that the prosciutto begins to shred in the grocer's slicer, it's drying out. Ask for slices from another piece or try another store.



Prosciutto

PANCETTA IS LIKE BACON, BUT SUBTLER

Pancetta is a belly cut of pork, just like American bacon. The difference is that it's salt-cured, like prosciutto, rather than smoked, which accounts for its more subtle, delicate flavor. Pancetta (pronounced pan-CHEH-tah) doesn't get

dried, and it isn't aged for as long as prosciutto is. It's usually rolled; you'll see it sold in a cylinder shape. Good pancetta should have streaks of pale maroon meat and pale white fat, and the meat shouldn't look greasy.

Pancetta is cured, so it's safe to eat raw, but it tastes quite fatty this way. It's much better cooked (see sidebar below).

Pork Braciote with Ragù

This recipe is inspired by one my mother made. The sauce that the meat cooks in is delicious on pasta. *Serves six to eight.*

*1 cup fresh breadcrumbs
6 Tbs. finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
3 Tbs. freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
5 cloves garlic (1 finely chopped, 4 lightly crushed)
2 Tbs. pine nuts
2 Tbs. golden raisins, soaked in warm water for 15 min. and drained
1/2 cup chopped pancetta (about 2 oz.)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
2 1/2 lb. boneless pork loin roast, cut into 16 slices and pounded 1/8-inch thick*

*8 thin slices prosciutto (about 2 oz.)
3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
1 small onion, finely chopped
1/2 cup dry white wine
Two 28-oz. cans crushed tomatoes, juice included
1 Tbs. finely chopped fresh mint*

Make the stuffing—In a bowl, toss the breadcrumbs with 3 Tbs. of the parsley, the cheese, chopped garlic, pine nuts, raisins, and half the pancetta. Season with salt and pepper. Lay the pork slices in front of you, season very lightly with salt and pepper, and lay half a slice of prosciutto on top of each. Put a heaping tablespoon of stuffing on one end of a pork slice and roll up the meat, tucking in the sides. Skewer with a toothpick to secure. Repeat with the rest of the slices.

In a Dutch oven or a flameproof earthenware casserole, heat the olive oil, remaining pancetta, and crushed garlic cloves over medium-high heat. Cook until the pancetta turns translucent, about 4 min., stirring frequently so the garlic doesn't burn. Add the onion and pork rolls and cook, turning with tongs, until the rolls turn color on all sides, about 8 min. Pour in the wine and cook until more than half is evaporated, about 5 min. Reduce the heat to low, add the tomatoes, salt, and pepper, and simmer until the meat is tender, 40 to 45 min. Remove the rolls, turn the heat to high, and reduce the sauce until thickened, about 7 min. Turn the heat off, add the mint and remaining parsley, stir, and return the rolls to the sauce. Let steep for 5 min. before serving. Taste and adjust seasonings. Serve the rolls with a little sauce; be sure to remind diners about the toothpicks.

Cliff Wright is the author of Italian Pure & Simple (William Morrow, 1998). ♦



Wrap prosciutto around peaches for a simple, luscious snack.

The best way to eat good prosciutto is raw—by itself or with a simple accompaniment.

♦ Drape a slice around a piece of peach, fig, melon, or strawberry.

- ♦ Wrap a slice around cooked asparagus or green beans; slip in a few pine nuts.
- ♦ Tuck a slice into half a hollowed-out plum tomato.
- ♦ Bundle spinach cooked in olive oil and garlic in a slice of prosciutto.
- ♦ Envelope buffalo mozzarella cheese or slivers of unsalted butter with a slice.

Cooking with pancetta is a lot like cooking with bacon. It's rolled, so it may unravel slightly when you use it as a wrapping, but it will still taste great.

♦ Finely chop pancetta with onion, carrots, and celery to make a *battuto* (which becomes a *soffritto* when it's cooked), the beginning of a delicious sauce, risotto, or *ragù*.

- ♦ Sauté chopped pancetta until crisp and toss it with bitter greens for a salad.
- ♦ Wrap chicken breasts or pork tenderloin in pancetta and grill. Try the same for grilled asparagus spears or green beans.
- ♦ Microwave a few slices between paper towels until the pancetta is firm, for about a minute,

and eat it with raw tomatoes.



Grill pancetta-wrapped asparagus for a savory first course.

Raw prosciutto is great with fruit or cheese; cooked pancetta adds depth to stews and vegetables



Making Irresistible Indian *Samosas*

Filled with a fragrant spiced potato stuffing, these crisp, flaky turnovers are great for a party or a light dinner

BY JULIE SAHNI

If you've ever eaten at an Indian restaurant, you have probably tried—and fallen in love with—*samosas*. Usually served as an appetizer, these fried, jauntily triangular pastries may be filled with meat, vegetables, or both. The most popular version is the spicy potato and pea filling of *aloo samosas* (pronounced ah-LOO sah-MOH-sahs; *aloo* means potato).

In India, *samosas* are eaten as a light nibble enjoyed in tea parlors and coffee houses, or sold by street vendors from pushcarts. But I'll serve them along with some soup and salad for an informal family meal. *Samosas* are also wonderful finger-food for cocktail parties; they're great for buffets because they're delicious at room temperature.

GET A FLAKY-CRISP CRUST BY RUBBING THE FAT INTO THE FLOUR

What I like best about *samosas* is their crisp and flaky crust, called *khasta*. Its unique texture, with the delicacy of pie crust but some of the chewiness of bread crust, is achieved by incorporating solid fat into the flour with a technique called *moyan*, or rubbing.

Rubbing the flour entails picking up some fat and flour with one hand, and then sliding the other hand against the flour and fat from heel to fingertips. The action should look a little like you're warming your hands by a fire, except that instead of rubbing back and forth, you pick up more fat and flour and repeat the forward sliding action again.

Toast fragrant spices for a mix called *garam masala*



Prepare the spices (see ingredient list, p. 66) before toasting them. Remove the cardamom seeds from the pods, if necessary, and slightly crush the cinnamon to make it easier to toast.



Toast all the spices but the nutmeg over medium heat, shaking the pan occasionally. The spices are ready when they release their aromas and turn several shades darker, in about 6 minutes.

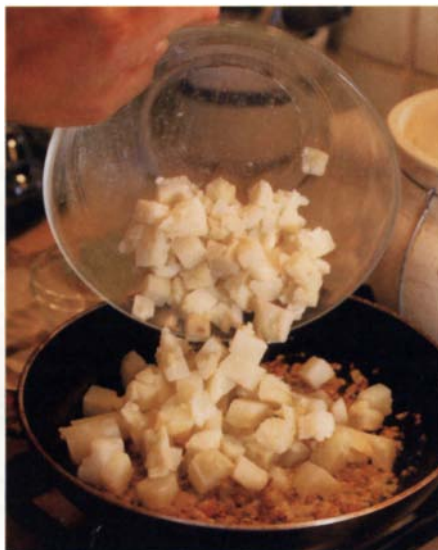


Cool the spices on a plate, add the nutmeg, and grind to a fine powder. A coffee grinder dedicated to spices works great.

Prepare a simple, spicy potato filling



In a large skillet over medium-high heat, cook the coriander seeds in some ghee or shortening to release their flavor. When the seeds turn a few shades darker, add the grated ginger and chopped shallots; cook until soft, about 2 minutes.



Add the diced cooked potatoes next and sauté until slightly golden, about 3 minutes.



Turn off the burner and add the cayenne, garam masala, lemon juice, peas, and salt, gently tossing to combine. The filling must be cooled completely before the samosas are filled.

The trick is to rub gently; you don't want to compact the flour and fat like clay. Rather, the combined fat and flour should feel dry and crumbly. The even distribution of fat makes a tender pastry by coating the proteins in the flour and discouraging the formation of gluten. Rubbing gently keeps the pieces of shortening somewhat intact, allowing them to form flaky layers in the dough when the fat melts and steam pushes the layers apart. Compared to puff pastry, in which the fat is incorporated to create many whole layers, the *samosa* pastry will puff rather unevenly, giving the crust its characteristic bumps and bubbles.

And unlike pie crust, which is not kneaded (to keep gluten from forming), *samosa* dough is briefly

kneaded to allow the partial formation of gluten. This makes the crust a little stronger to hold in the filling and gives it some elasticity, which keeps it from cracking open when fried.

When incorporating the liquid ingredients, add just a little at a time until the dough comes together in a mass that can be kneaded. Depending on the humidity and the flour, you may need more or less liquid.

Samosa dough can be prepared up to five days ahead. Seal it in plastic wrap and refrigerate it. Bring the dough to room temperature before working with it. You can also freeze it longer; just let it thaw in the refrigerator before bringing it to room temperature.

SPICE UP A POTATO FILLING WITH GINGER, CAYENNE, AND GARAM MASALA

The potatoes for the filling should be boiled whole with skins on until they're very soft. In fact, it's fine if they burst and crack. Let them cool completely before peeling. Potatoes that have been boiled a day earlier and refrigerated are ideal. The long rest tightens the texture and reduces the potatoes' moisture content.

Because the potatoes are very soft, some will crush and crumble as you cut them up. Don't worry: this coarse-mashed texture is just what you want. (But don't be tempted to actually mash them or the filling will take on an unappealing brown color.) I often just break the potatoes apart with my hands into roughly ½-inch pieces. But I recommend using a knife at first because if some pieces are left too large, they may push through the skin of the dough during frying.

The spice mix garam masala gives samosas their essential flavor. *Garam* means warm or hot; *masala*

Ghee is a toasty clarified butter that's perfect for sautéing

Ghee and clarified butter are quite similar. Both are made by heating butter until the water is evaporated and the milk solids are separated (see p. 10 for directions). Both allow for cooking at higher temperatures, since it's the solids in butter that burn. The difference is that *ghee* (pronounced with a hard g, like guest) is simmered a little longer, giving it its characteristic sweet caramel aroma. It's more like clarified brown butter. Just a little *ghee* adds a mountain of flavor.



Make the flaky dough by rubbing the fat and flour together



For crispy, flaky results, rub the fat into the flour. Mix the flour with the baking soda and salt; make a well in the center and put the shortening in the well. Pick up some flour and fat in one hand. Slide the other hand lightly over this mixture, moving from heel to fingertips, letting the fat-coated flour fall back into the bowl. Pick up more fat and flour and continue this sliding action until the flour is evenly coated; it should have a fine texture with no lumps.

means spice mix. The traditional, or Mughal, *garam masala* (pronounced gah-RAHM mah-SAH-lah) is a blend of four aromatic spices: cardamom, cinnamon, cloves, and black pepper. Like curries, *garam masalas* can take on different flavors. Flavorings like fennel, nutmeg, and bay leaves are often added. A spicier mix that includes cumin and coriander seeds is the preferred version for *aloo samosas*. You can buy *garam masala* at Indian and specialty grocers, but if you make it yourself, you'll get a more fragrant, fresh flavor.

The spices in *garam masala* are toasted to bring out their flavors and to lend a smoky aroma to the mix before they're ground to a powder. Toasting and frying spices—as the coriander is fried in the first step of the filling—is an important facet of Indian cooking. Cooking spices brings out their fragrance and flavor and can change the character of a spice.

When toasting spices, use your nose and eyes as guides. Take the spices off the heat when they smell fragrant and begin to darken. Only toast whole spices; add ground spices (like the nutmeg in this recipe) to the mixture off the heat. Your *garam masala* will taste best soon after it's made, but covered tightly



Add the yogurt-water mixture a little at a time. Add just enough liquid until the dough comes together in a mass. "Judge more by feel than measurement," suggests author Julie Sahni. Depending on the flour and the humidity, you may need more or less liquid.



Knead the dough until it's smooth and elastic. The dough is ready when it's no longer sticky and feels as soft as an earlobe, after about 5 minutes of kneading. Roll the dough into an 8-inch log, wrap it in plastic, and let it rest for about 15 minutes. (It can also be wrapped tightly and chilled for a day or frozen for longer. Bring it to room temperature before continuing.)

Roll the dough into 6-inch rounds



Cut the dough into eight even pieces. Roll each piece into a ball and flatten slightly. Keep the pieces you're not working with covered with plastic wrap.



Roll a flattened piece of dough into a thin 6-inch round. To get even results, roll from the center of the dough to the edge and turn the dough frequently. Rolling back and forth will toughen the dough. The author achieves a uniform thickness by pressing slightly harder with her left hand, which makes the round spin as she rolls.

Shape the dough into a cone and fill with the potato mixture



Cut the rolled circle in half—one half makes a *samosa*. Moisten half of the straight edge with a little flour-water mixture.



Create a cone by bringing the dry half of the edge over the moistened half. Overlap them by $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.



Press the seam together to close. Be sure to pinch closed the point of the cone as well. A good seam will keep the stuffing in during frying.

Samosas are great finger food—perfect for a party.

and kept in a cool, dry, dark place, it will keep for about three months.

A FEW TIPS FOR FORMING, FILLING, AND FRYING SAMOSAS

How to roll, shape, fill, and cook the *samosas* is described in detail in the photos beginning on p. 65. There are, however, a few things to keep in mind.

- ◆ **Cool the filling completely before stuffing the *samosas*.** A filling that's too hot will melt the fat in the dough prematurely, making the crust leaden. You can make the filling up to a day ahead and refrigerate it; bring it to room temperature before using it.

- ◆ **Pinch all seams together tightly.** Secure seams will keep the filling from bursting out during frying. Don't forget to press together the point of the cone or you'll leave a hole into which the oil can seep, making the filling greasy.

- ◆ **Hold the *samosa* about a third of the way up** as you fill it. This will keep the cone from collapsing.

- ◆ **Don't overstuff or understuff.** Two heaping tablespoons of filling per *samosa* is about right. With too much filling, the *samosa* may burst; with too little, all you'll taste is dough and the cone will collapse. Once the *samosas* are filled, you can keep them covered in the refrigerator for a day. When you're ready to cook them, simply fry them straight from the refrigerator.

- ◆ **Fry *samosas* gently in batches.** Keep the temperature of the oil around 350°F and turn the *samosas* often. A higher temperature will brown them too quickly without cooking the dough through. The slow frying also enables the pastry crust to brown evenly and become flaky. Frying them a few at a time will keep the temperature of the oil more consistent. As they're finished, drain them on a paper towel.

SAMOSAS NEED A SAUCE—IDEALLY TWO

Samosas are traditionally accompanied by dipping sauces, which help balance the richness of the pastry crust. The most popular is a sweet-and-sour chutney. In India it's made with tamarind because that fruit is abundant there. But you can match the flavor exactly with grocery staples such as prune and apple butters. Another favorite sauce is made from fresh cilantro laced with green chiles. I like to have both because they complement each other and they're simple to make.

Although you can serve *samosas* hot out of the frying pan, they're also delicious at room temperature.

Store cooked *samosas* in the fridge. Wrapped loosely in foil or plastic, they'll last for two days. You can also freeze them for up to six months by wrapping them in foil and then sealing them in plastic. Thaw frozen *samosas* in the fridge before reheating them.

Reheat in the fryer or the oven. I prefer to reheat leftover *samosas* by dropping them in hot (375°F) oil for a minute and a half. They're also delicious, if a tad less crisp, arranged in a single layer on a baking sheet and put in a 350°F oven for about 10 minutes. Don't put them in the microwave; it would turn the *samosa's* crust soggy and limp.

Spicy Potato Samosas (*Aloo Samosas*)

Yields 16 samosas.

FOR THE GARAM MASALA:

Yields $\frac{1}{2}$ cup.

2 Tbs. cumin seeds

2 Tbs. coriander seeds

2 Tbs. black peppercorns

2 tsp. cardamom seeds (from about 8 pods)

1 tsp. whole cloves

3-inch cinnamon stick, broken and slightly crushed

Pinch closed and fry until golden brown



Fill the cone with two heaping tablespoons of the spicy potato mixture. Hold the cone about a third of the way up to keep it from collapsing as you fill it.



Brush one open side with the flour-water mixture and pinch the two sides together. To give the samosas their characteristic flared ruffle, continue to pinch the straight edge to slightly thin and extend it.



Fry the samosas gently in batches. Fill a heavy, deep pan with 4 inches of oil and heat it to between 325°F and 350°F. Check the oil temperature with a deep-frying thermometer.

3 bay leaves, bruised
½ tsp. grated nutmeg

FOR THE FILLING:

1 tsp. coriander seeds
2 to 3 Tbs. ghee or vegetable shortening
1 tsp. freshly grated ginger
¼ cup minced shallots
1¼ lb. baking potatoes, boiled until just beginning to fall apart, cooled, peeled, and cut into ½-inch cubes
¼ to ½ tsp. cayenne
1 tsp. garam masala (see recipe at left)
2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
½ cup frozen green peas, thawed
1½ tsp. coarse salt

FOR THE DOUGH:

5½ oz. (1¼ cups) unbleached white flour;
more for dusting
⅛ tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. coarse salt
¼ cup vegetable shortening
2 Tbs. plain yogurt, mixed with ¼ cup water (more as needed)
2 Tbs. flour dissolved in 3 Tbs. water
Peanut oil or corn oil for deep-frying

For the method, follow the photos starting on p. 63.

½ tsp. cayenne
1 Tbs. dark brown sugar
Pinch coarse salt
2 tsp. freshly grated ginger
1 tsp. minced fresh mint leaves
¼ cup raisins

Combine all the ingredients in a bowl and beat with a whisk until blended. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate for up to 3 days or freeze for up to 3 weeks.

Cilantro Dip

Yields 1 cup.

½ cup fresh lemon juice
2 Tbs. sugar
2 large cloves garlic
1 cup packed fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems
3 small fresh hot chiles (such as jalapeño or serrano), stemmed and seeded
¼ cup chopped walnuts
Coarse salt to taste

Combine all the ingredients except the salt in a food processor and purée thoroughly. Transfer to a bowl and add salt to taste. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate for several weeks.



Cook the samosas until they're golden brown, at least 5 minutes. Drain them on a paper towel. Samosas are best served immediately but can be reheated by following the directions in the text at left.

Sweet & Sour Fruit Dipping Sauce

Yields 1⅓ cups.

¼ cup prune butter
¼ cup apple butter
¼ cup cider vinegar
¾ cup hot water
1 tsp. ground ginger
1 tsp. toasted and ground cumin seeds

Julie Sahni is the author of *Classic Indian Cooking* and *Savoring Spices & Herbs* (William Morrow, 1980 and 1996). ♦



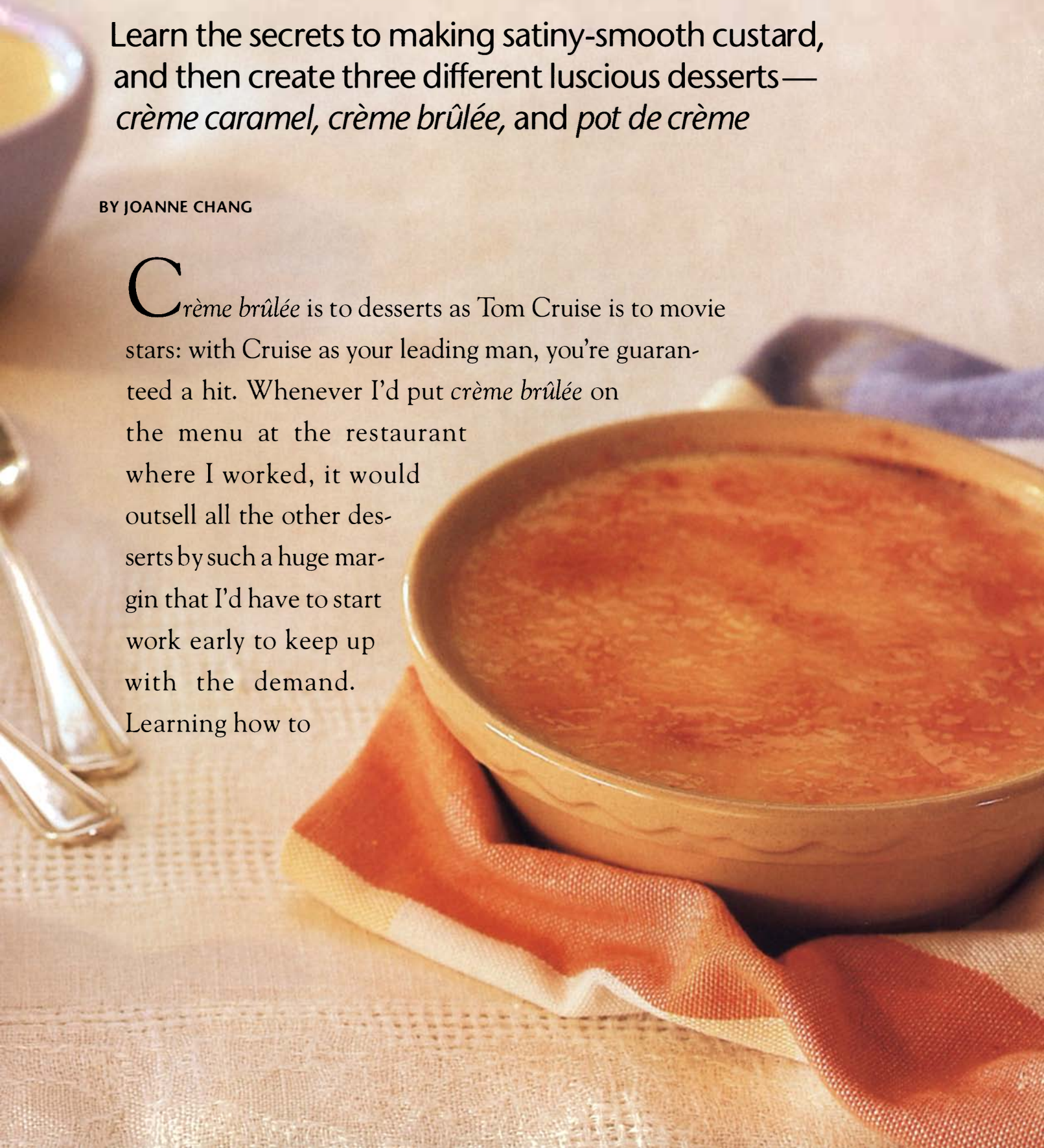
Each of these classic custard desserts has its own delicious appeal: silky crème caramel (above) rests in a pool of tawny caramel sauce; rich crème brûlée (far right) is topped with a sheer, crackly layer of caramel; and unadorned pot de crème (at right)—this one flavored with espresso—is a dish of pure sweet creaminess.

A Trio of Silky Custards

Learn the secrets to making satiny-smooth custard, and then create three different luscious desserts—*crème caramel*, *crème brûlée*, and *pot de crème*

BY JOANNE CHANG

C*rème brûlée* is to desserts as Tom Cruise is to movie stars: with Cruise as your leading man, you're guaranteed a hit. Whenever I'd put *crème brûlée* on the menu at the restaurant where I worked, it would outsell all the other desserts by such a huge margin that I'd have to start work early to keep up with the demand. Learning how to



make the creamy classic seems to be just as popular—I once taught a pastry class and noticed two burly uniformed men among the mainly female audience. They turned out to be firemen who had come to turn off the smoke detectors before my class started; when they learned I was doing *crème brûlée*, they stayed for the class.

Crème brûlée (pronounced KREHM broo-LAY) belongs to the family of custards that includes the classic *crème caramel* (KREHM kair-ah-MEHL) and the lesser known but equally luxurious *pot de crème* (POH duh KREHM). From a simple list of ingredients—eggs, sugar, milk, cream, and a flavoring such as vanilla—comes this array of suave, silky baked custards.

HOW ARE THEY ALL RELATED?

One day, after months of making hundreds of custards, it hit me: all these desserts are the same. *Crème caramel* is a baked custard that's cooked in a caramel-lined ramekin; *crème brûlée* is a baked custard that's topped with a sheer, crackly layer of caramelized sugar; and *pot de crème* is, well, a baked custard.



Scalding the cream isn't critical but it is handy. Scalding (a holdover from the days before pasteurization) speeds total cooking time and helps dissolve the sugar. When you see small bubbles at the sides of the pan, the cream is hot enough.

Making caramel for *crème caramel*

Place your ramekins in the baking dish and have them nearby. For six to eight servings, measure ½ cup sugar into a clean saucepan. Carefully add just enough water to dissolve the sugar, and set the pot over high heat.



Swirl the pan frequently to help the sugar color evenly without burning.

After a few minutes, the mixture will come to a furious boil; several minutes later, as more water evaporates, it will boil more viscously, and finally it will start to color. Swirl the pan around to even out the caramelization. Once the sugar has started to caramelize, watch it carefully. It takes just seconds for caramel to go from great to burnt.



The moment you pour caramel into the ramekin, tilt the dish so the caramel flows evenly over the bottom.

When the caramel is an even dark brown, carefully pour it into the ramekins. Caramel at this stage is over 300°F, so be extremely careful when handling it. Divide it evenly so that each ramekin is covered with a thin layer of dark brown caramel.

Same technique, but different results. You'll notice that all three custards share the same mixing and baking techniques. Look closer, however, and you find that the proportions for each custard vary and that, while the variations seem small, they actually correspond to a different result.

Crème brûlée is the richest of the three. All heavy cream and yolks, this custard cooks up rich and thick—a wonderful contrast to the glassy brittle layer of caramelized sugar it's topped with. Next is *pot de crème*. With equal parts cream and milk and lots of egg yolks, it is eggy and soft and smooth, pure custard to be spooned out of a cup and savored unadorned. And finally, *crème caramel* is the lightest, with whole eggs as well as yolks, milk as well as cream. It's meant to be inverted out of its baking ramekin so its tawny caramel sauce can pool around it; the egg whites make the custard firm enough to stand on its own.

TIPS FOR BAKING THE SILKIEST CUSTARDS

As you can see from the recipes, custards aren't complicated desserts, but in order to make them what they should be—suave in texture, mellow and rich in flavor—you need to pay close attention to details.

♦ Many recipes direct you to scald the milk and cream; this is a holdover from the days of unpasteurized milk. Scalding does, however, shorten cooking time because the milk is already hot; it also ensures that the sugar dissolves completely in the custard base before baking, so I recommend this step. If you're making a flavored custard, add any additional ingredients at this point so they can steep in the hot cream to extract their full flavor.



"Tempering" is a key technique for all custards. Author Joanne Chang slowly whisks the hot cream mixture into the cool eggs and sugar, which prevents the eggs from curdling.

◆ Don't dump the sugar directly onto the eggs and let it sit; this causes the yolks to "burn" into hard little lumps that detract from your creamy custard. Rather, add the sugar while your whisk is moving; this way, the sugar will be gradually incorporated into the eggs.

◆ One of the most important techniques in baking is called tempering, which is the slow addition of a hot liquid to cold eggs. Tempering gradually brings the temperature of the two mixtures together and keeps you from making scrambled eggs, which is what you get when a scalding hot liquid shocks an egg. To temper, add a large spoonful of the hot cream

A smooth custard needs gentle heat. Start with a protective water bath and a sheet of foil, and cook the custards in a low oven—325°F is tops.



to the egg-sugar mixture, whisking all the while. Add another spoonful, and then another, and continue until all the cream is mixed in.

- ◆ Always cook custards in a water bath. A water bath shields the custard from harsh, direct oven heat and moderates the cooking.

- ◆ An oven hotter than 325°F is asking for trouble; for custards, the more gentle the heat, the better.

THE WOBBLE TEST SAYS IT'S DONE

Ovens vary in temperature day to day; sometimes your custard base is hotter or cooler than usual; perhaps your ramekins have thinner or thicker walls. I always play it safe and check the custards early just in case. Also, custards continue to cook a little and set up after they're taken from the oven—another reason to take them out just before they're done.

To test for doneness, wiggle a ramekin around. It should be wobbly like Jell-O, but not soupy. When the custard in the ramekin moves as one mass rather than as a cup of liquid cream, it's ready. If a knife inserted in the center comes out clean, then the cus-

tard is probably overcooked. If this happens, remove the ramekins immediately from the water bath and plunge them into ice water to bring the temperature down and stop the cooking. Note that *crème caramel* will usually cook much faster than the other custards because of the egg whites in the base, which are full of proteins that coagulate at a lower temperature.



Crème brûlée

Two ways to make a crackly caramel topping for *crème brûlée*

THE BLOWTORCH METHOD:

By far the easiest method of caramelizing sugar on a *crème brûlée* is with a propane blowtorch. Blowtorches are sold in most hardware stores, with good ones going for around \$30. (Williams-Sonoma also carries a mini torch for \$34; to order, call 800/541-2233.) I highly recommend buying one with an automatic ignition, which allows you to light the torch with the press of a button—no matches needed.



Sift a thin, even layer of sugar over the refrigerated custards, ignite the torch, and with a slow, sweeping motion, guide the flame directly on the surface of the custard. The nozzle should be 2 to 3 inches from the surface, with the tip of the flame licking the sugar. The sugar will melt slowly at first and then caramelize. As soon as the entire surface is glossy brown, move on to the next custard.

THE BROILER METHOD:

This method is only successful with a very hot broiler in a gas oven (electric ovens don't seem to provide heat high enough to caramelize the sugar). Line a baking dish with a towel to keep the baked custards from sliding around and arrange them on top. Fill the spaces between the ramekins with ice and add water so that they're surrounded by ice water. This will keep them cold and creamy while their tops are being caramelized.



Sift a thin, even layer of sugar on the surface of each custard and gently slide the baking dish under the broiler, positioning it so that the flame is 2 to 3 inches away from the tops of the custards. Watch carefully: within three or four minutes, the sugar will melt and then caramelize. Remove the baking dish and take out the ramekins.

Crème Caramel

Serves six.

2 cups heavy cream
1 cup milk
½ vanilla bean or 1 tsp. vanilla extract
½ cup sugar
3 egg yolks
2 eggs
Pinch salt

FOR THE CARAMEL:

½ cup sugar

Crème Brûlée

Serves eight.

1 quart heavy cream
½ vanilla bean or 1 tsp. vanilla extract
½ cup sugar
10 egg yolks
Pinch salt

FOR THE CARAMEL TOPPING:

½ cup sugar

Pot de Crème

Serves eight.

2 cups heavy cream
2 cups milk

½ vanilla bean or 1 tsp. vanilla extract

½ cup sugar

8 egg yolks

Pinch salt

The basic method for all three types of custard—Use 6-oz. ramekins. Heat the oven to 325°F. Heat the cream or cream and milk in a medium saucepan over medium heat until scalded (you'll see small bubbles on the sides of the pan). Split the vanilla bean in half, if using, and scrape the seeds into the cream. Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, slowly whisk the sugar into the egg yolks and eggs. Slowly temper the hot cream/milk into the sugar/yolk mixture (see p. 71 for tempering explanation). Strain the mixture through a fine sieve into a pitcher or measuring cup. Stir in the salt and vanilla extract, if using.

For *crème caramel*, make the caramel (see p. 70) and line the ramekins with it.

For all the custards, arrange the ramekins in a baking dish with deep sides. Pour the mixture into the ramekins. Fill the dish with water to come halfway up the sides of the ramekins and cover the dish with foil. Bake until just set, 30 to 50 min. Start checking early; baking time depends on the thickness and depth of the ramekins and baking dish. Carefully remove the baking dish from the oven; let the ramekins cool in the water bath. Remove, cover with plastic, and refrigerate at least 2 hours or up to 2 days.

Serve *pot de crème* as is, in the ramekin. For *crème caramel*, run a thin knife around the edge of the custard and invert onto a dessert plate, scraping any caramel from the ramekin onto the custard. For *crème brûlée*, follow the instructions at left for making the crackly topping.

ESPRESSO CUSTARD:

Omit the vanilla. Crush ½ cup espresso beans into coarse pieces, add to the cream/milk, and heat to a simmer. Remove from the heat; infuse for 5 min. Strain and proceed.

GINGER CUSTARD:

Omit the vanilla. Cut a 3-inch piece of fresh ginger into very thin slices, add to the cream/milk, and heat to a simmer. Remove from the heat; infuse for 15 to 20 min. Strain, bring back to a simmer, and proceed.

Joanne Chang is the pastry chef at Payard Pâtisserie in New York City. ♦



Crème caramel



Pot de crème

Create Chinese Flavor with Four Simple Ingredients



Essential pantry items for Chinese cooking: rice wine, soy sauce, scallions, and ginger.

In all great cuisines there are key ingredients that provide the flavors we recognize immediately, a sort of culinary calling card. Tomatoes, garlic, and olive oil are emblematic of Italian cooking; curries, coconut, and coriander call to mind the cooking of southern India.

In Chinese cooking, the distinguishing ingredients are what I call my “Gang of Four”: ginger, scallion, rice wine, and soy sauce. With these four, you can give a dish a distinctly Chinese flavor without needing much in the way of a recipe and without having to hunt for anything exotic.

THE YIN AND YANG OF CHINESE FLAVORINGS

The Chinese concept of yin and yang—a pairing in which one element balances and accentuates the other to create a harmonious whole—is at the core of Chinese cooking. Of the four ingredients, hot ginger almost always pairs

with grassy scallion, and dusky soy sauce with acidic rice wine. The two pairs work on their own as well as together.

Ginger and scallion, for example, will perfume a dish, giving it a bright flavor. Soy sauce and rice wine tenderize and season; together, they lend a round, not sharp, flavor. All four ingredients make a wonderful marinade and are often used in stir-fries.

Fresh ginger is the hallmark of real Chinese cooking. When a Chinese recipe calls for ginger, it means fresh, not powdered. Good ginger is rock-hard, its skin papery and stretched taut over the bulb. When slicing ginger (I often cut it into thin rounds called coins), cut against the grain to sever its wiry fibers. I don’t bother peeling ginger unless the skin is shriveled and old.

In Chinese cooking, the whole length of the scallion is used. Only the bearded

roots, wilted tops, and straggly stalks are pared away.

For a marinade, smash scallion pieces and ginger coins with the broad side of a cleaver or chef’s knife. The bashing spreads the flavorful juices to the surface, ready for a quick infusion into liquid. For stir-fries, mince ginger and scallion cleanly with a sharp knife, and then let them bubble without browning in the oil, flavoring and perfuming the oil before adding your other ingredients.

Soy sauce is the most ancient of Chinese condiments. Brewed from fermented soybeans, it colors, seasons, and preserves food. To find one you like, buy and taste several. My favorite everyday soy sauce is

Kikkoman. Avoid non-brewed soys whose ingredient lists read like chemistry experiments.

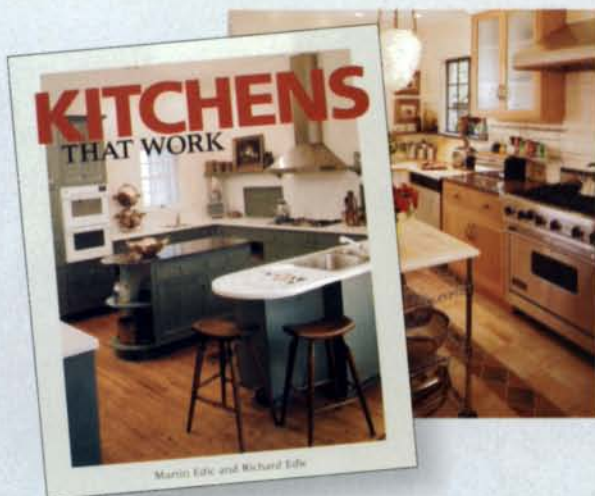
Chinese rice wine should be golden, nutty, and fine tasting. Brewed from rice and water, it’s a staple of drinking and cooking in China. Look for a brand imported from China; don’t buy any of the clear liquids made domestically, which taste vile. If you can’t find a good imported rice wine, a good-quality dry sherry is a fine substitute. Japanese sake is not, however; it has an altogether different flavor.

These four ingredients give you the basic palette of Chinese cooking. You can paint an even more colorful picture with the addition of garlic, cilantro, and dried chile flakes.

Barbara Tropp is the author of The China Moon Cookbook (Workman, 1992). ♦

EXPERIMENT WITH CHINESE FLAVORS

- ♦ For a quick, emblematically Chinese stir-fry, start by foaming minced scallion and ginger in oil until fragrant. Add blanched vegetables, sliced meat, fish, or poultry. Finish by adding a simple sauce of equal parts soy sauce and rice wine, enhanced with a bit of sugar, to the pan.
- ♦ Add ginger and scallion to homemade stock to brighten and subtly flavor it. For 2 quarts of stock, use ¼ cup each of quarter-size ginger coins and 1-inch scallion pieces; strain before using.
- ♦ Add interest to simple fish fillets or even whole fish by topping them with julienned scallion and ginger before steaming or roasting.
- ♦ Enhance the meaty flavor of hamburgers or meatloaf with a mixture of equal parts soy sauce and rice wine. Minced ginger and scallion are unexpected but delicious additions.
- ♦ Stuff a chicken with scallion nuggets and ginger coins before roasting.
- ♦ Marinate meats, fish, and poultry (or vegetables for grilling or roasting) in 1 part ginger and scallion to 8 parts blended soy sauce and rice wine. Boost the flavor with garlic, dried chile flakes, and a little sugar.



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Pared or grated, citrus zest adds fresh flavor and fragrance

The peels of lemons, limes, oranges, and other citrus are much more than pretty packaging. They're valuable sources of flavor and fragrance for all manner of dishes, from a

refreshing granita to a robust Provençal beef stew.

Every peel has two parts—the colorful outer layer, called the zest, and the soft, white interior layer, called the pith or albedo. As cooks, we're generally after the zest, because it's filled with potent aromatic oils—in fact, the zest often offers more flavor and fragrance than the juice of the fruit. The pith, however, is bitter and must be removed.

Wide strips of paper-thin citrus zest are ideal for infusing syrups or sauces and for recipes where there's enough heat and time for the flavors to be fully extracted, like a soup. After cooking, the large pieces

of zest are easily strained or fished out. For a julienne of zest to use as a garnish, stack a few pared strips and cut them into slivers with a chef's knife. A two-minute blanch in boil-

ing water softens the zest enough to make it edible.

Finely grated zest releases the most flavor. In many dessert recipes, the zest is added directly to the batter, and so it needs to be very finely chopped or grated so that it disperses evenly and isn't unpleasant to chew.

A five-hole citrus zester is the easiest tool to use since it removes only the thinnest layer of zest in long thin strips which can then be easily chopped with a knife or in a mini processor.

While “grated” and “finely chopped” are interchangeable in most recipes, I prefer grated zest because it won't interfere



Zest should be paper-thin with every trace of white pith removed. Set the pared strips on a flat work surface and scrape away any pith from the underside.



A julienne of zest makes a bright garnish for desserts. Stack wider slices and cut into slivers.

“Sweating” vegetables coaxes out flavor

The term “sweating” is common in professional kitchens, but most cookbooks use the longhand version instead: *cook over low heat until soft and translucent.* While the term “sweating” itself may not whet your appetite, the technique surely will. Sweating is reserved primarily for sliced or chopped vegetables (though when making fish stock, you “sweat” fish bones) as an initial, flavor-building step in a more complex recipe—such as

braising or sauce-making. By sweating vegetables first before adding other ingredients, you release their flavors and add more character to the finished dish.

Use a little butter or oil and low heat.

Unlike sautéing, you never want the fat to get hot enough to sizzle during sweating. The idea is cook the vegetables, stirring occasionally, so they soften gently without browning at all. A lid helps, too, since the vegetables will steam a bit in their own moisture.

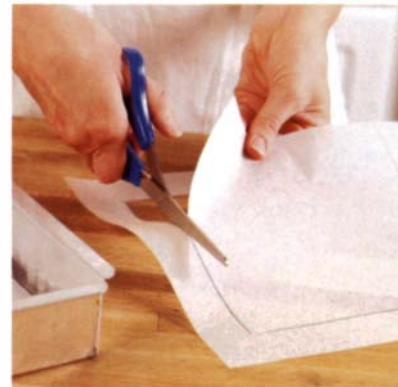


Bake perfect cakes with custom-made pan liners

Lining your cake pans with kitchen parchment makes it easier to remove the cake from the pan and speeds clean-up, too. Here's how to cut parchment so it fits your pans perfectly.



Cut a perfect circle by folding and unfolding. Fold a square of parchment into quarters and then into eighths or sixteenths to make a triangle. Measure the exact size of the cake pan by holding the point of the triangle at the center of the inverted pan. Using scissors, snip the edges of the paper to match the size of the pan, giving it a slightly rounded shape. Unfold the paper and press it smoothly into the base of the lightly greased pan.



Draw a pencil outline for square and rectangular baking pans. Hold the baking pan squarely in place on a piece of parchment with one hand, and use the other to outline the base of the pan with a pencil. Take away the pan and cut just inside the pencil lines. Lightly grease the pan, lay the parchment in it, and smooth out any creases.

with the texture of a smooth sauce, and there's no risk of ending up with little chunks of zest in the finished dish.

Twist, turn, and crush strips of zest to release the



Use the grater's smallest holes, and don't press hard enough to scrape the white pith. A pastry brush helps free the zest from the grater.

aromatic oils. While grating or chopping unlocks a lot of flavor from the zest, you can get even more by adding the grated zest at the beginning of any mixing or kneading. For



A five-hole zester makes quick work of zesting fruit. Its shallow blade won't go any deeper than the zest.

example, when you add the zest to butter and sugar while creaming, the sugar acts as an abrasive and extracts the maximum amount of flavor.

Wash citrus before zesting. Since many fruit packers coat citrus with an edible wax to maintain freshness, it's a

good idea to scrub them briefly under warm water before removing the zest. Remember also that it's much easier to remove the zest from citrus before peeling the fruit.

Molly Stevens is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. ♦

How much zest and juice do you get from citrus?

	grated zest, lightly packed	juice, unstrained
1 lime	1 to 1½ teaspoons	about 3 tablespoons
1 lemon	2 to 3 teaspoons	¼ to ½ cup
1 orange	about 1 tablespoon	about ½ cup
1 grapefruit	about 1½ tablespoons	about 1 cup

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Salt Makes Bread Doughs Strong, but It Can Make Pastries Tough

In all kinds of breads and pastries, from chewy focaccia to melt-in-your-mouth shortbread, salt is a key flavor component. But salt does more than enhance flavor: it interacts with other ingredients, sometimes creating beneficial effects, sometimes being a downright nuisance. Knowing what salt does can help you decide when to add it to your recipe (and sometimes how much to add). You can then take advantage of salt's good effects, like making bread dough nice and elastic, and avoid potential problems, like making pastry doughs tough.

The most significant thing to know is that salt strengthens gluten. Gluten is made of water and two proteins. Salt tightens the molecular bonds between these components, possibly by removing some of the water. This tightening is a mixed blessing: adding salt to a yeast dough increases dough strength and prevents weakness and stickiness, but it also increases the mixing time needed to reach maximum dough development. If you start kneading a dough without salt, when you do add the salt you can literally see the dough tighten. If you stretch the dough before and after the addition of salt, you will feel an amazing difference in the strength of the gluten.

Salt is a key ingredient in baking. Besides enhancing flavor, it tightens gluten, which is usually great for breads, not so great for cakes and pastries.

You can see this in photos on the opposite page.

Some bakers like to knead the dough first and then work in the salt because dough is easier to knead and requires a shorter kneading time without the salt. Then the salt can be mixed in to strengthen the dough just before the rising and shaping. Other bakers worry that the salt may not be evenly distributed throughout the dough when added at the end. You may want to try both

methods to see which you prefer. The type of salt can make a major difference in how well it blends. Flaky sea salt and Diamond Crystal kosher salt dissolve and blend faster and better than granular table salt because they are fragile flakes that have much greater surface than granule.

Salt's effect on gluten is also an issue in pastry-making, where tight, strong dough is *not* desirable. The stage at which you add the salt can de-

termine whether you develop too much gluten, but as with bread dough, you need to balance the desire to control gluten with the need for the salt to be well distributed. Some cooks like the ease of adding it to the flour at the start; they feel that the salt gets distributed well enough. Others like to add it to the liquid for more even distribution.

If you mix the salt with the flour, some of the salt will be greased by the fat and there-



Photos: Scott Phillips

fore it probably won't affect gluten formation, yet it will still be there for taste. Adding the salt to the liquid risks greater gluten formation and toughness, since gluten can only form in flour when it comes in contact with water. Also, in many pastry recipes, the water is added little by little until you have the right consistency—you may not add all of it and therefore not all the salt. To be sure that you get all the salt in, put all the salt in part of the liquid, add that, and then add as much of the remaining liquid as you need.

Salt and yeast is another tricky combination, as salt can be harmful to yeast activity. Even a small amount, such as $\frac{1}{3}$ teaspoon of salt per cup

Salt helps dough become elastic



No salt, no strength. This basic whole-wheat dough, made without any salt, was kneaded for five minutes, but not much gluten has developed.



Salty means stretchy. The same dough was made with salt and also kneaded for five minutes. The gluten has developed enough to form this gluten window.

of flour, slows yeast growth noticeably by killing some of the yeast cells and so reducing the number of cells that are reproducing. In fact, some bakers will deliberately slow the rise

of a batch of dough (for example, until the next shift at the bakery arrives) by adding a little more salt to the dough.

Salt's capacity to slow yeast activity poses a real dilemma

for the baker since salt is such an important flavor component of bread. If you've ever tasted bread without salt, you know how strange it tastes. The very small amount of salt in bread does not provide a strong saltiness but does bring out the delicious flavor components of freshly baked bread. So what can you do? If more than $\frac{1}{3}$ teaspoon per cup of flour risks interfering with yeast, then one solution is to glaze the bread with a fairly salty glaze.

Shirley O. Corriher teaches cooking and food science across the country. She's the author of *CookWise* (William Morrow, 1997) and a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*. ♦

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G. Total distribution	162,144	174,739
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An Inspiring New Compendium of Vegetable Recipes

In spite of all the talk about the Food Guide Pyramid and the Mediterranean diet, as often as not, I still like to see some animal protein in the center of my plate. Not that I've got anything against vegetables. It's just that I think they taste best when they're cooked with lots of bacon fat.

But if there's a cook out there who can make me happy to sit down to a meatless meal, it's Deborah Madison.

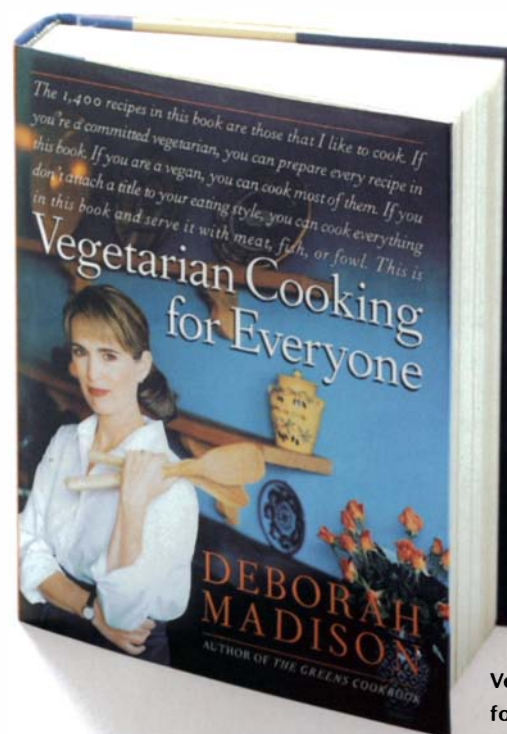
A founder of Greens, the lauded vegetarian restaurant in San Francisco, and the author of several meatless cookbooks, Madison is one vegetable-loving cook who always puts flavor first. She cooks her vegetables long enough for their flavors to develop, and she's not afraid of fat or salt. More important,

she never resorts to nutritional scare tactics or sanctimonious sermonizing. She's not out to convert anyone to a cause, because she has none, other than the love of good food.

Deborah Madison's enthusiasm for vegetables is contagious—even to confirmed meat lovers like me.

In the introduction to her new book, *Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone*, Madison comes clean about her own vegetarian status. "I don't, in fact, exclude animal products from my world," she states. "However, vegetables, and all those other wonderful plant foods, are my first loves."

The hefty 732-page book



Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone, by Deborah Madison. Broadway Books, 1997. \$35, hardcover; 742 pp. ISBN 0-7679-0014-6.

includes an incredible range of recipes, but anyone looking for tofu pups and soy meatloaf will be disappointed. Instead, you'll find recipes for a salad of fresh figs, walnuts, and manchego cheese; Golden Polenta Cakes; Butternut Squash Ravioli with Pecans; and a Sizzling Risotto Gratin in

which readers are advised to use the best-quality butter and cheese they can find.

Many of the recipes reflect the author's travels and the great vegetarian cuisines of the world. There are recipes for curries and stir-fries, soba noodles and enchiladas, as well as what she claims are neglected American classics: grits, pancakes, spoon bread, succotash, split pea soup—

What cookbook would you give to people who want to cook more with vegetables?

"Well, other than Deborah Madison's new book? Faith Willinger's *Red, White & Greens*. I remember when that book arrived at our house. I was sick, and my husband, who isn't a cook, followed the recipes exactly from her book and produced one absolutely delicious dish after another, and I got well!"
—Paula Wolfert, author of the forthcoming *Mediterranean Greens & Grains* (HarperCollins, 1998)

"I like Elizabeth Schneider's *Uncommon Fruits & Vegetables* because it helps you expand your vegetable palate range. It has simple recipes, and it teaches you the basics on how to use more exotic vegetables—boniatos, cardoons, taro, tomatillos—they're all in there."
—John Schenk, executive chef, *Clementine*, New York City

"My tired and battered copy of *The Good Cook: Vegetables*, part of the Time/Life series edited by Richard Olney. It's really excellent because it covers all the techniques for cooking with vegetables, from braising to sautéing, and it has excellent technical illustrations—and great recipes."
—Georgeann Brennan, author of *Potager: Fresh Garden Cooking in the French Style* and other cookbooks from Chronicle Books

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2 tablespoons margarine or butter

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even blue cheese dressing.

Her Tomato & Red Pepper Tart is a late-summer stunner. The thick, jam-like filling is seasoned with saffron and anise and is absolutely delicious. It's versatile, too. I can imagine using it as a filling for ravioli or on top of pizza or bruschetta.

I had never heard of Tarrator Sauce before, but it too is delicious, and simple to make. This nut sauce from the Middle East is thickened with breadcrumbs and seasoned with garlic and parsley. I took her advice to serve it with grilled eggplant, and she's right—it's excellent.

Her Spaghetti with Zucchini & Basil is one of those simple but oh-so-good pasta sauces that belongs in every cook's repertoire.

I can't say that I loved every recipe that I tried. I was a sucker for the headnote for the Lentils with Fried

Spinach or Chard Catalan Style

From *Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone*, by Deborah Madison, Broadway Books, 1997.

Raisins and pine nuts are what make this side dish Catalan, but the same ingredients appear in the south of France and Italy—parts of the same culinary world. Serves four.

2 bunches spinach or 1 large bunch chard, stems removed, leaves blanched

2 Tbs. olive oil

1 large garlic clove, sliced

1/3 cup dark or golden raisins

1/3 cup pine nuts

Salt and freshly milled pepper

Coarsely chop the cooked spinach. Warm the oil with the garlic in a wide skillet over medium heat. When the garlic is golden, remove it. Add the raisins and pine nuts and cook until the raisins are plumped and the pine nuts are golden. Add the greens and cook until they're heated through. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

The desserts are simple, homespun sweets, with a focus on fruit. Look no further for delicious recipes for crisps (Rhubarb-Apple, Blueberry, Pear), cobblers (Plum, Spiced Peach, Nectarine), and compotes (Winter Citrus, Apricot & Berry). I es-

basic cooking methods. She also includes her suggestions for pairing wine with vegetables, according to how the vegetables are seasoned. Throughout the book, Madison encourages cooks to relax and remember that the process itself is meant to be a pleasure.

One of the things that makes *Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone* such a pleasure to read is that Madison is a sensualist. She writes of the "fundamental joy in cooking, born of the pleasure of using our senses—rustling our fingers through a bunch of herbs, listening to the sizzle of onions, watching the colors brighten while vegetables cook...."

Sidebars throughout the book contribute to its readability. Some are quaint, like one called "The Egg Timing Song," gleaned from an old community cookbook. Others offer more practical advice, like instructions for peeling, seeding, and chopping tomatoes. And she brings a rare note of reason to the current concern over salmonella when she reminds us that "data suggests that [our alarm] is out of proportion to

the probability of contracting the disease."

Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone is evidence that eating vegetarian food doesn't have to be an exercise in denial and guilt. What Madison offers instead is a book full of sound cooking advice and tasty vegetarian recipes that anyone, regardless of what else they might eat, can appreciate.

Jan Newberry is the former managing editor of *Fine Cooking*. She now eats her vegetables (and a little meat, too) in Oakland, California. ♦



Laurie Smith's colorful photos accent the easy-to-read recipes, which all include helpful serving suggestions.

Onions, which claims that this is "absolutely one of the best dishes that there is." I found further encouragement in the 6 tablespoons of olive oil called for in the recipe list, but the stodgy paste I ended up with tasted like boiled Birkenstocks to me. Oh well.

pecially loved the fig and honey tart with its easy-to-make pastry.

Madison writes that she wants this book to be "a soup to nuts compendium for those who want to cook well without meat." An early chapter called "Becoming a Cook" includes a summary of

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whys of successful cooking and includes over 230 recipes to help readers attain perfection—the moistest cake, the puffiest soufflé, the most stable sauce. (*CookWise*, by Shirley O. Corriher. William Morrow, 1997. \$28.50, hardcover; 524 pp. ISBN 0-688-10229-8.)



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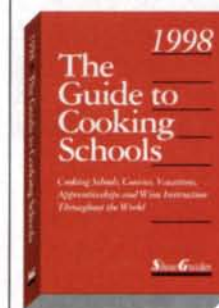
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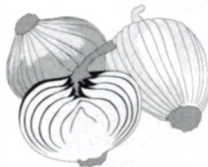


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Citrus, zest and juice yields 77
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Recipe (analysis per serving)	Page	Calories		Protein (g)	Carb (g)	Fats (g)				Chol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Notes
		total	from fat			total	sat	mono	poly				
Quick-Roasted Beets	32	110	60	2	11	7	1	5	1	0	380	3	4 servings per lb.
Quick-Roasted Carrots	32	110	60	1	11	7	1	5	1	0	330	3	4 servings per lb.
Quick-Roasted Celery Root	32	210	130	3	21	14	2	10	2	0	810	4	2 servings per lb.
Quick-Roasted Parsnips	32	190	90	2	27	9	1	7	1	0	400	7	3 servings per lb.
Quick-Roasted Red Onions	32	130	80	2	12	9	1	7	1	0	780	2	3 servings per lb.
Quick-Roasted Red Potatoes	32	200	80	3	27	9	1	7	1	0	780	2	3 servings per lb.
Quick-Roasted Sweet Potatoes	32	190	80	2	29	8	1	6	1	0	620	4	4 servings per lb.
Quick-Roasted Turnips	32	180	120	2	14	14	2	10	1	0	730	4	2 servings per lb.
Quick-Roasted Winter Squash	32	120	80	1	12	9	1	6	1	0	880	2	4 servings per lb.
Parmesan-Crumbed Chicken	36	360	160	43	6	18	9	6	1	130	990	1	
Orange-Curry Chicken	37	510	270	38	24	30	9	14	5	120	780	3	
Garlic Chicken w/Chip-Basil Crust	37	550	300	38	26	33	9	16	6	105	630	2	
Sesame-Lemon Chicken	37	440	210	38	20	23	8	7	7	115	580	2	
Smooth & Silky Potato Purée	40	570	370	5	47	42	26	12	2	115	860	5	
Potato & Celery Root Purée	40	290	160	4	31	18	11	5	1	45	990	4	
Buttermilk Mashed Potatoes	41	360	160	5	47	17	11	5	1	50	870	5	
Mashed Potatoes with Olive Oil	41	440	250	4	46	27	4	20	3	0	840	5	
Artichoke Torta	44	210	120	14	10	13	5	5	1	190	950	4	1/10 torta
Bouillabaisse	45	740	320	59	39	35	6	23	5	170	1040	5	
Rouille	46	45	35	0	1	4	0.5	3	0.5	0	25	0	per tablespoon
Walnut Frangipane Tart	46	330	230	4	23	25	12	7	5	90	85	1	1/10 tart
Sweet & Sour Braised Fennel	48	130	70	2	17	7	1	5	1	0	370	5	
Spaghettini with Roasted Fennel	49	1000	380	37	121	43	11	25	5	30	1390	16	
Fennel & Parmesan Gratin	49	140	90	5	9	10	3	6	1	5	360	4	
Chocolate Cake with Frosting	52	620	310	7	77	34	21	10	1	110	270	3	1/16 cake
Pork Bracirole with Ragù	61	420	170	39	24	19	6	10	2	95	1090	5	based on 8 servings
Spicy Potato Samosas	66	180	110	2	17	12	3	5	3	5	260	1	per samosa w/o dip
Sweet & Sour Fruit Dipping Sauce	67	30	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	15	1	per tablespoon
Cilantro Dip	67	25	10	1	4	1	0	0.5	0.5	0	30	0	per tablespoon
Crème Caramel	73	480	310	6	38	35	20	11	2	290	125	0	
Crème Brûlée	73	580	450	6	29	50	30	15	3	430	90	0	
Pot de Crème	73	350	260	6	17	29	17	9	2	300	95	0	
Larry Forgione's Pork Chops	90	330	140	22	23	16	3	5	6	50	710	6	

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of San Diego, California. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in

the calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used.



Pork Chops with Beer, Cabbage & Apples

Serves four.

4 center-cut pork chops, about 1½ inches thick
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 Tbs. vegetable oil
1 small red onion, thinly sliced
1 Tbs. Dijon-style mustard
½ head Savoy cabbage (about 1 lb.), cored and thinly sliced
2 tart apples, peeled, cored, and cut into ½-inch slices
1 cup beer or ale
2 sprigs fresh thyme or ½ tsp. dried
½ cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock

Season the chops on both sides with salt and pepper.

Heat the oil in a large, heavy skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Add the chops and cook on one side until well browned; turn and brown other side. Transfer to a plate and set aside.

Put the onion in the pan and cook, stirring, until softened, about 5 min. Stir in the mustard and ½ tsp. pepper. Add the cabbage and apples, season lightly with more salt, and cook, stirring, for another minute. Add the beer, thyme, and stock. Bring to a boil and cook for about 5 min. to intensify the flavors.

Return the chops to the skillet, burying them in the cabbage mixture. Cover the pan and simmer until the pork is just cooked through, about 15 min. Season to taste. Arrange the chops on plates and top with the cabbage.

Beer-Braised Pork Chops Make a Flavorful Meal from One Pan

Sometimes what makes cooking seem difficult isn't the actual cooking but the cleaning up. That's one reason this pork chop recipe is such a breeze. You get everything you need—the meat, the vegetable, and the sauce—right in one pan. And though the execution of this recipe is simple (peeling an apple, chopping some cabbage, and opening a bottle of beer), the flavors are

sophisticated enough that I serve this dish at The Beekman Tavern, my restaurant in upstate New York.

Because pork is bred leaner these days, it's ever more challenging to cook a tender, juicy pork chop. This method, in which you gently brown the chops to give them a deep, caramelized flavor and then simmer them in liquid, stacks the odds in the cook's favor.

Other ways to guarantee good results: ask your butcher for chops cut from the rib, which are more consistently tender than loin chops; give the chops a couple of taps with a mallet, which helps tenderize them by breaking down the meat's tough fibers; brown the chops gently on medium-high heat to prevent overcooking; and cook the chop at a gentle simmer (boiling the chops will

draw their juices out and toughen the meat fibers).

I like to serve this dish with hearty, flavorful bread, like pumpernickel. What to drink? More beer makes sense to me.

Larry Forgione is the chef/owner of An American Place and The Grill Room in New York City, as well as The Beekman Tavern at The Beekman Arms in Rhinebeck, New York. ♦

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Knorr 3-Step Parma Rosa Chicken

Makes 4 Servings

Total Time: 20 Minutes

4 boneless, skinless
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(about 1 lb)
½ tsp Italian
seasoning

1 Tbsp Mazola® corn oil
1 pkg **Knorr** Parma
Rosa Pasta Sauce Mix
1¼ cups milk
1 Tbsp butter or margarine

4 slices tomato (optional)
4 slices mozzarella
cheese

- ① Sprinkle chicken with Italian seasoning. In large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add chicken and brown, turning occasionally, about 5 minutes. Place chicken in 11x17-inch glass baking dish.
- ② In same skillet prepare pasta sauce according to package directions with milk and butter. Pour half of sauce over chicken; top with tomatoes, cheese and remaining sauce.
- ③ Cover and bake in 375° oven for 10 minutes or until chicken is tender and cheese melts.



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The first step is to wash the olives and remove any stems and debris. Zecca likes to include a few leaves in the mix, however, which he believes contribute to a better tasting oil.



Enormous, 3,600-pound granite stones crush the olives into a paste. Modern hammermills can pulverize the olives in just seconds, but they heat the olives, which alters the taste of the oil. Crushing the olives with stones is time-consuming, but because they create only negligible heat, the granite stones produce superior oil.



The olive paste is spread on nylon mats, which are stacked, layered with steel plates, and hydraulically pressed with 5,000 pounds of pressure per square inch to extract the oil. The paste releases a cloudy liquid full of small particles of suspended fruit.



The liquid is spun in a centrifuge, which separates the olive oil from the water and solids. After a resting period of a month or two, during which the oil mellows and loses some of its natural pepperiness, the oil is bottled.

Like wine, the flavor of an olive oil can tell you where it's from. California olive oils come in a variety of styles, but in general, they tend to be richer and more buttery than the peppery, pleasantly bitter oils from Tuscany.